A

PRACTICAL DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

DEATH.

BY

WILLIAM SHERLOCK, D. D.

LATE

DEAN of St PAUL'S.

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To

To the Worshipful the

MASTERS of the BENCH,

And the reſt of the

MEMBERS

OF THE

Two Honourable Societies

OF THE

TEMPLE.

My much honoured Friends,

ONE reaſon of publiſhing this plain diſcourſe is, becauſe I cannot now preach to you as formerly I have done, and have no other way left of diſcharging my duty to you, but by making the preſs ſupply the place of the pulpit. Part of this you have already heard, and ſhould have heard the reſt, had I enjoyed the ſame liberty ſtill; which God reſtore to me again when he ſees fit; if not, his will be done.

And the only reaſon of this dedica-

tion is, to make this public and thankful acknowledgement (before I am forced from you, if I muſt be ſo unhappy) of your great reſpects, and many ſingular favours to me; which have been always ſo free and generous, that they never gave time, nor left any room for me to aſk; eſpecially that obliging welcome you gave me at my firſt coming, I mean your preſent of a houſe, which, beſides the conveniences and pleaſures of a delightful habitation, has afforded me that which I value much more, the frequent opportunities of your converſation.

Though I am able to make you no better return than thanks, I hope that great Maſter whom I ſerve will; and that GOD would multiply all temporal and ſpiritual bleſſings on you, is, and always ſhall be, the ſincere and hearty prayer of,

GENTLEMEN,

Your moſt obliged,

and humble Servant,

W. Sherlock.

TO

Dr SHERLOCK,

ON

His DISCOURSE concerning DEATH.

FORGIVE the Muſe, who, in unhallow'd ſtrains,
The ſaint one moment from his GOD detains.
For ſure whate'er you do, whate'er you are,
'Tis all but one good work, one conſtant prayer.
Forgive her; and intreat that GOD to whom
Thy favour'd vows with kind acceptance come,
To raiſe her notes to that ſublime degree,
That ſuits a ſong of piety and thee.

WOND'ROUS good man! whoſe labours may repel
The force of ſin, may ſtop the rage of hell:
Who, like the Baptiſt, from thy GOD was ſent
The crying voice to bid the world repent.

THEE youth ſhall ſtudy; and no more engage
His flattering wiſhes for uncertain age;
No more, with fruitleſs care, and cheated ſtrife,
Chace fleeting pleaſure through the maze of life;
Finding

Finding the wretched All he here can have,
But preſent food, and but a future grave;
Each, great as Philip's victor ſon, ſhall view
This abject world, and weeping aſk a new.

DECREPIT age ſhall read thee, and confeſs
Thy labours can aſſwage where med'cines ceaſe:
Shall bleſs thy words, their wounded ſouls relief;
The drops that ſweeten their laſt dregs of life;
Shall look to heav'n, and laugh at all beneath;
Own riches gather'd, trouble; fame, a breath;
And life, an ill, whoſe only cure is death.

THY even thoughts with ſo much plainneſs flow,
Their ſenſe untutor'd infancy may know;
Yet to ſuch height is all that plainneſs wrought,
Wit may admire, and letter'd pride be taught.
Eaſy in words thy ſtyle, in ſenſe ſublime;
On its bleſt ſteps each age and ſex may riſe;
'Tis like the ladder in the Patriarch's dream,
Its foot on earth, its height beyond the ſkies.
Diffus'd its virtue, boundleſs is its pow'r;
'Tis public health, and univerſal cure.
Of heavenly manna 'tis a ſecond feaſt,
A nation's food, and all to ev'ry taſte.

To its laſt height mad Britain's guilt was rear'd;
And various deaths for various crimes ſhe fear'd;
With your kind work her drooping hopes revive,
You bid her read, repent, adore, and live.
You wreſt the bolt from Heaven's avenging hand;
Stop ready death, and ſave a ſinking land.

O! SAVE us ſtill, ſtill bleſs us with thy ſtay;
O! want thy Heaven, 'till we have learnt the way;
Refuſe to leave thy deſtin'd charge too ſoon;
And for the church's good, defer thy own:
O! live, and let thy works urge our belief;
Live to explain thy doctrine by thy life;
'Till future infancy, baptiz'd by thee,
Grow ripe in years, and old in piety;
'Till Chriſtians yet unborn be taught to die.

THEN in full age, and hoary holineſs,
Retire, great Teacher, to thy promis'd bliſs:
Untouch'd thy tomb, uninjur'd be thy duſt,
As thy own fame among the future juſt;
'Till in laſt ſounds the dreaded trumpet ſpeaks;
'Till judgment calls, and quicken'd nature wakes;
'Till through the utmoſt earth and deepeſt ſea,
Our ſcatter'd atoms find their deſtin'd way;
In haſte to cloath their kindred ſouls again,
Perfect our ſtate, and build immortal Man:
Then fearleſs, thou, who well ſuſtain'd the fight,
To paths of joy, and tracks of endleſs light,
Lead up all thoſe that heard thee and believ'd:
'Midſt thy own flock, great ſhepherd, be receiv'd;
And glad all heav'n with millions thou haſt ſav'd.

MATT. PRIOR.

A

PRACTICAL DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

DEATH.

HEB. ix. 27.

It is appointed unto all men once to die.

The INTRODUCTION.

THERE is not a more effectual way to revive the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity in the world, than ſeriouſly to meditate on what we commonly call the four laſt THINGS, Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell: for it is morally impoſſible men ſhould live ſuch careleſs lives, ſhould ſo wholly devote themſelves to this world, and the ſervice of their luſts; ſhould either caſt off the fear of God, and all reverence for his laws, or ſatisfy themſelves with ſome cold and formal devotions, were they poſſeſſed with a warm and conſtant ſenſe of theſe things. For what manner

of men ought we to be, who know that we muſt ſhortly die, and come to judgment, and receive according to what we have done in this world, whether it be good or evil, either eternal rewards in the kingdom of heaven, or eternal puniſhments with the devil and his angels?

That which firſt preſents itſelf to our thoughts, and ſhall be the ſubject of this following treatiſe, is DEATH; a very terrible thing, the very naming of which is apt to chill our blood and ſpirits, and to draw a dark veil over all the glories of this life. And yet this is the condition of all mankind; we muſt as ſurely die, as we were born: *For it is appointed unto men once to die.* This is not the original law of our nature: for though man was made of the duſt of the earth, and therefore was by nature mortal, (for that which is made of duſt is by nature corruptible, and may be diſſolved into duſt again); yet had he not ſinned, he ſhould never have died; he ſhould have been immortal by grace, and therefore had the ſacrament of Immortality, the Tree of Life, planted in Paradiſe: but now "by man ſin entered into the "world, and death by ſin; and ſo death "paſſed upon all men, for that all have "ſinned," *Rom.* v. 12. And thus it is decreed and appointed by God, by an irreverſible

verſible ſentence, "Duſt thou art, and un-
"to duſt thou ſhalt return."

Now to improve this meditation to the beſt advantage, I ſhall, 1. Conſider what death is, and what wiſdom that ſhould teach us. 2. The certainty of our death, that *it is appointed unto men once to die.* 3. The time of our death; it muſt be once, but when, we know not. 4. The natural fears and terrors of death, or our natural averſion to it, and how they may be allayed and ſweetened.

CHAP. I.

The ſeveral Notions of Death, and the Improvement of them.

1. WHAT Death is: And I ſhall conſider three things in it: 1. That it is our leaving this world. 2. Our putting off theſe earthly bodies. 3. Our enterance into a new and unknown ſtate of life: for when we die, we do not fall into nothing, or into a profound ſleep, into a ſtate of ſilence and inſenſibility 'till the reſurrection; but we only change our place, and our dwelling; we remove out of this world, and leave our bodies to ſleep in the earth till the reſurrection; but our ſouls and ſpirits ſtill live in an inviſible ſtate.

I ſhall not go about to prove theſe things, but take it for granted that you all believe them; for that we leave this world, and that our bodies rot and putrify in the grave, needs no proof, for we ſee it with our eyes; and that our ſouls cannot die, but are by nature immortal, has been the belief of all mankind. The gods which the Heathens worſhipped, were moſt of them no other but dead men; and therefore they did believe that the ſoul ſurvived the funeral of the body, or they could never have made gods of them: nay, there is ſuch a ſtrong ſenſe of immortality imprinted in our natures, that very few men, how much ſoever they have debauched their natural ſentiments, can wholly deliver themſelves from the fears of another world. But we have a more ſure word of prophecy than this: ſince "life and immortality is brought "to light by the goſpel." For this is ſo plainly taught in ſcripture, that no man who believes that, needs any other proof: My buſineſs therefore ſhall only be to ſhew you how ſuch thoughts as theſe ſhould affect our minds; what that wiſdom is, which the thoughts of death will naturally teach us; how that man ought to live, who knows that he muſt die, and leave his body behind him to rot in the grave, and go himſelf into a new world of ſpirits.

SECT.

SECT. I.

The first Notion of Death, That it is our leaving this World; with the Improvement of it.

I. FIRST then, let us consider Death only as our leaving this world; a very delightful place, you'll say, especially when our circumstances are easy and prosperous: here a man finds whatever he most naturally loves, whatever he takes pleasure in; the supply of all his wants, the gratification of all his senses, whatever an earthly creature can wish for or desire. The truth is, few men know any other happiness, much less any thing above it. They feel what strikes upon their senses: this they think a real and substantial good; but as for more pure and intellectual joys, they know no more what to make of them than of ghosts and spirits; they account them thin vanishing things, and wonder what men mean who talk so much of them. Nay, good men themselves are apt to be too much pleased with this world, while they are easy here; something else is necessary to wean them from it, and to cure their fondness of it, besides the thoughts of dying; which makes the

ſufferings and afflictions, and diſappointments of this life, ſo neceſſary for the beſt of men. This is one thing which makes the thoughts of death ſo terrible: men think themſelves very well as they are, and moſt men think they cannot be better, and therefore very few are deſirous of a change. Extreme miſeries may conquer the love of life, and ſome few divine ſouls may long with St Paul to be diſſolved and to be with Chriſt, which is beſt of all: but this world is a beloved place to the generality of mankind, and that makes it a very troubleſome thing to leave it: whereas, did we rightly conſider this matter, it would rectify our miſtakes about theſe things, and teach us how to value, and how to uſe them. For,

1. If we muſt leave this world, how valuable ſoever theſe things are in themſelves, they are not ſo valuable to us. For beſides the intrinſic worth of things, there is ſomething more required to engage the affections of wiſe men; *viz.* property, and a ſecure enjoyment. What is not our own, we may admire if it be excellent, but cannot doat on; and what is worth having, increaſes or decreaſes in value, proportionable to the length and certainty of its continuance. What we cannot enjoy is nothing to us, how excellent ſoever it be; and to enjoy

enjoy it but a little while is next to not enjoying it, for we cannot enjoy it always; and ſuch things cannot be called our own. And this ſhews us what value we ought to ſet upon this world, and all things in it; even juſt ſo much as upon things that are not our own, and which we cannot keep.

We uſe indeed to call things our own, which we have a legal title to, which no man can by law or juſtice deprive us of; and this is the only property we can have in theſe things, a property againſt all other human claims: but nothing which can be taken from us, nothing which we muſt leave, is properly our own; for in a ſtrict ſenſe nothing is our own, but what is eſſential either to our being, or to our happineſs. Creatures are proprietors of nothing, not ſo much as of themſelves; for we are His who made us, and may unmake us again when he pleaſes: but yet there are ſome things proper to our natures, and that is all the natural property we have; but what is thus proper to us, we cannot be deprived of, without ceaſing to be, or being miſerable.

And this proves that the things of this world are not our own, that they are not proper and peculiar to our natures, tho' they are neceſſary to this preſent ſtate of life.

life. While we live here we want them, but when we leave this world, we muſt live without them, and may be happy without them too. There is a great agreeableneſs between the things of this world, and an earthly nature; they are a great ſupport and comfort to us in this mortal ſtate; and therefore while we live in this world we may value the enjoyments of it, for the eaſe and conveniences of life; but we muſt neither call this life, nor any enjoyments of it, our own, becauſe they are ſhort and periſhing. We are here but as travellers in an inn; it is not our home and country, it is not our portion and inheritance, but a moveable and changeable ſcene, which is entertaining at preſent, but cannot laſt. Let us then conſider how we ought to value ſuch things as theſe: and to make it as plain and ſelf-evident as I can, I ſhall put ſome eaſy and familiar caſes.

1. Suppoſe you were travelling thro' a very delightful country, where you met with all the pleaſures and conveniences of life, but knew that you muſt not tarry there, but only paſs thro' it: would you think it reaſonable to ſet your affections ſo much upon it, as to make it uneaſy to you to leave it? And ſhall we then grow ſo fond of this world, which we muſt only paſs thro', where we have no abiding city,

as

as to enſlave ourſelves to the luſts and pleaſures of it, and to carry out of this world ſuch a paſſion for it, as ſhall make us miſerable in the next? For tho' death will ſeparate us from this world, we are not ſure it will cure our earthly paſſions: we may ſtill find the torment of ſenſual appetites, when all ſenſual objects are removed. This was all the purgatory-fire St Auſtin could think of, that thoſe who loved this world too much here, tho' otherwiſe innocent and virtuous men, ſhould be puniſhed with fruitleſs deſires and hankering after this world in the next; which is a mixed torment of deſire and deſpair. For tho' indeed it is only living in theſe bodies which betrays the ſoul to ſuch earthly affections; yet when the impreſſion is once made, and is ſtrong and vigorous, we are not ſure that merely putting off theſe bodies will cure it; as we ſee age itſelf in old ſinners does not cure the wantonneſs of deſire, when the body is effete and languid: and this I ſhould think were reaſon enough to convince every man, who conſiders that he is not to live here always, how much it concerns him not to grow over-fond of preſent things; for to contract an eternal paſſion for what we cannot always enjoy, muſt needs make us miſerable.

2. If then we muſt not entertain a fond-

neſs

neſs for thoſe things which we cannot keep, let us in the next place conſider, how we muſt uſe thoſe things which we have but a preſent and momentary poſſeſſion of: for uſe is apt to beget a fondneſs. Suppoſe then again, that in your travels abroad, you paſs thro' ſuch a delightful country; what is it that prevents your fondneſs, but only conſidering that you are not at home, that you muſt not always ſee and enjoy what you now do? And therefore all the fine things you meet with, you rather look upon as curioſities to be remarked in ſtory, or to be tried by way of experiment, or to be uſed for preſent neceſſity, than as ſuch things which are to be enjoyed, which you know they are not. And did we uſe the world thus, we ſhould never grow over fond of it. Thoſe "who marry, "would be as though they married not; "and thoſe who weep, as though they "wept not; and thoſe who rejoice, as "though they rejoiced not; and thoſe "who uſe this world, as not abuſing it; "becauſe the faſhion of this world paſ-"ſeth away." The world itſelf will not laſt long, though it will out-laſt us; but we are to continue here ſo little a while, that we have no reaſon to call it our home, or to place our enjoyment in it. It is an old and a good diſtinction, that ſome things

are

are only for uſe, and ſome things for enjoyment. The firſt we value only for their uſe, the ſecond we account our happineſs. Now it is certain, that what is tranſient and momentary can be only for uſe; for man is a miſerable creature, if what is his happineſs be not laſting; and a very fooliſh creature, if he places his happineſs in what is not laſting. Now this ſhould make a vaſt difference in our affections to things. We cannot blame any man who lets looſe his affections upon that which is his happineſs; for there neither can, nor ought to be, any bounds ſet to our deſires or enjoyment of our true happineſs; but what we account only for uſe, we have no farther concernment for, but only as it is of uſe to us; and this confines our deſires and affections to its uſe: and were this the meaſure of our love to preſent things, as it ought to be, we could not err, nor entertain any troubleſome or vicious paſſions for them.

As for inſtance: what is the natural uſe of eating and drinking, but to repair the decays of nature, and preſerve our bodies in health and vigour? Now, as great delicacies and curioſities as there are in nature, both of food and liquors, if men valued them only for their uſe, they would never be guilty of exceſs, nor grow ſo

fond

fond of them, as if they were made only to eat and drink, and to judge of the differences of taſtes. To value things for their uſe, is to value them no further than they are uſeful; and this is the only value which is due to things which we muſt leave; for they can be only for preſent uſe: but when we come to place our happineſs, as all ſenſual men do, in things which are deſigned only for our uſe, it both makes us extravagant in the uſe of them, (which often proves a great miſchief to us in this world), and creates ſuch an unnatural paſſion for them, as they cannot anſwer; which makes them vain and empty, and unſatisfactory while we have them, and fills us with vexation, and all the reſtleſſneſs of a furious paſſion and appetite when we want them; as we muſt do at one time or other, either before, or, to be ſure, when we leave this world.

3. Let us ſuppoſe again, that in our paſſage thro' foreign countries, where we are not to ſtay long, we ſhould not meet with all thoſe neceſſaries and conveniences of life, which we have at home; that the country is barren, the way rough and mountainous, the road infeſted with thieves and robbers, but without any convenient reception for travellers, the people rude and barbarous, and inſolent to ſtrangers;

gers; will a wiſe man be over-ſollicitous about ſuch hardſhips as theſe in travelling? Does he not comfort himſelf, that he is not to ſtay there, that this will not laſt long; that theſe difficulties will only recommend his own country to him, and make him haſten home again, where he ſhall remember with pleaſure, what is now uneaſy and troubleſome?

And is there not as much reaſon for Chriſtians to bear all the evils, and caſualties, and ſufferings of this life with an equal mind, remembering that they are not to ſtay always here, that this life is but their pilgrimage, they are from home, and therefore muſt expect the uſage which ſtrangers and travellers ordinarily meet with? That they are not to live here always, is a ſufficient proof that their happineſs does not conſiſt in preſent things: and then if they can make a ſhift, tho' it may be it is a hard ſhift, to paſs thro' this world, the ſcene will be altered, and they ſhall find a kinder reception in the next. This is the foundation of contentment in all conditions, and of patience under ſufferings; that death, which is not far off, when it removes us out of this world, will remove us from all the ſufferings of it: and why ſhould we not bear up with the courage and reſolution of travellers in the mean time,

when we have home, a peaceful and eternal home, in our proſpect?

4. Once more, to conclude this argument: ſuppoſe a man in his travels thro' a foreign country ſhould be commanded immediately to leave the country, unleſs he would forſwear ever returning to his own country again; would not a wiſe man conſider, that if he had not been commanded to leave that country, he did not intend to have ſtayed long in it; and therefore it would be an unaccountable folly and madneſs in him to abjure his own country, where his father, and kindred, and inheritance is, only to gratify his curioſity in ſtaying a little longer there? And can we then think it a hard command, (when we know we muſt ſhortly die, and leave this world, that whether we will or no, we cannot ſtay long in it,) to ſacrifice our very lives, rather than renounce our hopes of heaven and a better life? When we know that we muſt leave this world, what does it ſignify to die a little ſooner than it may be in the courſe of nature we ſhould, to obtain an immortal life; to go to that bleſſed Jeſus who lived in this world for us, and died for us, and is ready to receive us into that bleſſed place where he is, that we may behold his glory? I am ſure it is a very fooliſh thing for a man who

who muſt die, to forfeit an immortal life, to reprieve a mortal and periſhing life for ſome few years.

II. As death, which is our leaving this world, proves that theſe preſent things are not the moſt valuable to us, ſo it proves that they are not the moſt valuable things in their own natures: tho' we were to enjoy them always, it would be but a very mean and imperfect ſtate, in compariſon of that better life which is reſerved for good men in the next world. For, 1. It is congruous to the divine wiſdom and goodneſs, that the beſt things ſhould be the moſt laſting: wiſdom dictates this; for it is no more than to give the preference to thoſe things which are beſt. The longeſt continuance gives a natural preference to things; we always value thoſe things moſt, which we ſhall enjoy the longeſt; and therefore to give the longeſt duration to the worſt things, is to ſet the greateſt value on them, and to teach mankind to prefer them before that which is better. What we value moſt, we deſire to enjoy longeſt, and were it in our power we would make ſuch things the moſt laſting; which ſhews that it is the natural ſenſe of mankind, that the beſt things deſerve to continue longeſt; and therefore we need not doubt, but that infinite Wiſdom which made the world,

has proportioned the continuance of things to their true worth. And if God has made the beſt things the moſt laſting, then the next world in its own intrinſick nature is as much better than this world, as it will laſt longer. For this is moſt agreeable to the divine goodneſs too, and God's love to his creatures, that what is their greateſt and trueſt happineſs ſhould be moſt laſting. For if God has made man capable of different degrees and ſtates of happineſs, of living in this world and in the next, it is an expreſſion of more perfect goodneſs (as it is moſt for the happineſs of his creatures) that the moſt perfect ſtate of happineſs ſhould laſt the longeſt: for the more perfectly happy we are, the more do we experience the divine goodneſs; and he is the moſt perfectly happy, who has the longeſt enjoyment of the beſt things.

2. It ſeems moſt agreeable alſo to the divine wiſdom and goodneſs, that where God makes ſuch a vaſt change in the ſtate of his creatures, as to remove them from this world to the next, the laſt ſtate ſhould be the moſt perfect and happy. I ſpeak now of ſuch creatures as God deſigns for happineſs; for the reaſon alters where he intends to puniſh. But where God intends to do good to creatures, it ſeems a very improper method to tranſlate them from a more perfect

perfect and happy, to a leſs happy ſtate. Every abatement of happineſs is a degree of puniſhment, and that which thoſe men are very ſenſible of, who have enjoyed a more perfect happineſs: and therefore we may certainly conclude, that God would not remove good men out of this world, were this the happieſt place.

Yes, you'll ſay, death is the puniſhment of ſin, and therefore it is a puniſhment to be removed out of this world; which ſpoils that argument, that this world is not the happieſt place, becauſe God removes good men out of it: for this is the effect of that curſe which was entailed on mankind for the ſin of Adam, "Duſt thou art, and unto "duſt thou ſhalt return."

Now I grant, death, as it ſignifies a ſeparation of ſoul and body, and the death of both, which was included in that curſe, was a curſe and a puniſhment; but not as it ſignifies leaving this world, and living in the next. We have ſome reaſon to think, that tho' man ſhould never have died, if he had not ſinned, yet he ſhould not always have lived in this world. Human nature was certainly made for greater things than the enjoyments of ſenſe: it is capable of nobler advancements, it is related to Heaven, and to the world of ſpirits; and therefore it ſeems more likely, that had man continued in-

nocent, and by the conſtant exerciſe of wiſdom and virtue improved his faculties and raiſed himſelf above this body, and grown up into the divine nature and life, after a long and happy life here, he ſhould have been tranſlated into Heaven, as Enoch and Elias were, without dying. For had all men continued innocent, and lived to this day, and propagated their kind, this little ſpot of earth had many ages ſince been over-peopled, and could not have ſubſiſted, without tranſplanting ſome colonies of the moſt divine and purified ſouls into the other world.

But however that be, it is certain, that being removed out of this world, and living in heaven, is not the curſe: this fallen man had no right to; for he, who by ſin had forfeited an earthly paradiſe, could not thereby gain a title to heaven. "Eter-" nal life is the gift of God, through Jeſus " Chriſt our Lord;" it is the reward of good men, of a well-ſpent life in this world, of our faith and patience in doing and ſuffering the will of God; it is our laſt and final ſtate, where we ſhall live for ever: and therefore the argument is ſtill good, that this world cannot be the happieſt place, for then heaven could not be a reward. Tho' all men are under the neceſſity of dying, yet if this world had been the happieſt

place,

place, God would have raiſed good men to have lived again in this world; which he could as eaſily have done, as have tranſlated them to heaven.

Now if this world be not the happieſt place, if preſent things be not the moſt valuable, as appears from this very conſideration, that we muſt leave this world, (for to this I muſt confine my diſcourſe at preſent) there are ſeveral very good uſes to be made of this: as, 1. To rectify our notions about preſent things. 2. To live in expectation of ſome better things. 3. Not to be over-concerned about the ſhortneſs of our lives here.

1. To rectify our notions about preſent things. 'Tis our opinions of things which ruin us: for what mankind account their greateſt happineſs, they muſt love; and they muſt love without bounds or meaſure: and it would go a great way to cure our extravagant fond neſs and paſſion for theſe things, could we perſuade ourſelves that there is any thing better: But this, I confeſs, is a very hard thing for moſt men to do, becauſe preſent things have much the advantage of what is abſent and future. Some who believe another life after this, whatever great things they may talk of the other world, yet do not ſeem thoroughly perſuaded that the next world is a happier ſtate than this;

this; for I think they could not be ſo fond of this world if they were: and the reaſon of it is plain, becauſe happineſs cannot be ſo well known, as by feeling; now men feel the pleaſures and happineſs of this world, but do not feel the happineſs of the next; and therefore are apt to think, that that is the greateſt happineſs, which does moſt ſenſibly affect them: but would they but ſeriouſly conſider things, they might ſee reaſon to think otherwiſe; that the unknown joys and pleaſures of the other world are much greater than any pleaſures which they feel here. For let us thus reaſon with ourſelves: I find I am mortal, and muſt ſhortly leave this world; and yet I believe that my ſoul cannot die as my body does, but ſhall only be tranſlated to another ſtate; whatever I take pleaſure in, in this world, I muſt leave behind me, and know not what I ſhall find in the next: but ſurely the other world, where I muſt live for ever, is not worſe furniſhed than this world, which I muſt ſo quickly leave. For has God made me immortal, and provided no ſorts of pleaſures and entertainments for an immortal ſtate, when he has ſo liberally furniſhed the ſhort and changeable ſcene of this life? I know not indeed what the pleaſures of the next world are; but no more did I know

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what the pleaſures of this world were till I came into it; and therefore, that is no argument that there are no pleaſures there, becauſe I do not yet know them. And if there be any pleaſures there, ſurely they muſt be greater than what are here, becauſe it is a more laſting ſtate. For can we think that God has emptied all his ſtores and treaſures into this world? nay, can we think that he has given us the beſt things firſt, where we can only juſt taſte them, and leave them behind us? which is to excite and provoke an appetite, which ſhall be reſtleſs and uneaſy to eternity. No, ſurely! the other world muſt be infinitely a more happy place than this, becauſe it will laſt infinitely longer. The divine wiſdom and good neſshas certainly reſerved the beſt things for eternity: for as eternal beings are the moſt perfect, ſo they muſt be the moſt happy too, unleſs we can ſeparate perfection and happineſs. And therefore I cannot but conclude, that there are greater pleaſures, that there is a happier ſtate of life than this, becauſe there is a life which laſts for ever.

2. This will naturally teach us to live in expectation of better things, of greater, tho' unknown and unexperienced pleaſures; which methinks all men ſhould do, who know that there are better things to be had, and that they muſt go into that ſtate

ſtate where theſe better things are to be had. For, can any man be contented with a leſs degree of happineſs, who knows there is greater? This is ſtupidity and baſeneſs of ſpirit; an ignoble mind, which is not capable of great hopes. Ambition and covetouſneſs indeed are ill names, but yet they are ſymptoms of a great and generous ſoul, and are excellent virtues, when directed to the right objects; that is, to ſuch objects as are truly great and excellent; for it is only the meanneſs of the object which makes them vices. To be ambitious of true honour, of the true glory and perfection of our natures, is the very principle and incentive of virtue; but to be ambitious of titles, of place, of ſome ceremonious reſpects, and civil pageantry, is as vain and little, as the things are which they court. To be covetous of true and real happineſs, to ſet no bounds nor meaſures to our deſire or purſuit of it, is true greatneſs of mind, which will take up with nothing on this ſide perfection; for God and nature have ſet no bounds to our deſires of happineſs: but as it is in natural, ſo it ought to be in moral agents, every thing grows till it comes to its maturity and perfection. But then covetouſneſs is a vice, when men miſtake their object, and are

inſatiable in their deſires of that which is not their happineſs; as gold and ſilver, houſes and land: what is more than we want, and more than we can uſe, cannot be the happineſs of a man. And thus it is on the other hand; tho' humility be a great virtue, as it is oppoſed to earthly ambitions, as it ſets us above the little opinions and courtſhip of the world, which are ſuch mean things, as argue meanneſs of ſpirit to ſtoop to them; yet it is not humility but ſordidneſs, to be regardleſs of true honour. Thus, to be contented with our external fortune in this world, whatever it be; to be able to ſee the greater proſperity and ſplendor of other men, without envy, and without repining at our own meanneſs, is a great virtue; becauſe theſe things are not our happineſs, but for the uſe and convenience of this preſent life; and to be contented with a little of them for preſent uſe, is an argument that we do not think them our happineſs, which is the true excellency of this virtue of contentment: but to be contented, if we may ſo call it, to want that which is our true happineſs, or any degree or portion of it, to be contented never to enjoy the greateſt and the beſt things, is a vice which contradicts the natural deſires of happineſs; and you may call it what you will,

will, if you can think of any name bad enough for it. It is the moſt deſpicable temper in the world to have no ſenſe of true honour or happineſs; or, when we know there are greater and better things, to take up with ſome low enjoyments.

And therefore, let the thoughts of this ennoble our minds, and ſince there are better things in the other world, let us uſe our utmoſt endeavours to poſſeſs ourſelves of them; let us live like men who are born for greater things than this world affords; let us endeavour to inform ourſelves what the happineſs of the next world is, and how we may attain it; and let us uſe all preſent things, as thoſe who know there are infinitely greater and better things reſerved for us in the next world.

3. This ſhould teach us alſo not to be overconcerned for the ſhortneſs of our lives. Our lives indeed are very ſhort, they fly away like a ſhadow, and fade like the flowers of the field; and this were a very unſupportable thought, were there either no life after this, or not ſo happy a life as this. But beſides all the other proofs we have of another life, the very ſhortneſs of our lives may convince us, that death doth not put an end to our being: for can we imagine, that ſo noble a creature as man is, was made for a day?

man, I ſay, who is big with ſuch immortal deſigns, full of proſpects for future ages, who can look backward and forward, and ſee eternity without beginning, and without end; who was made to contemplate the wonders of nature and providence, and to admire and adore his Maker; who is the lord of this lower world; but has eyes to look up to Heaven, and view all the glories of it, and to pry into that inviſible world, which this veil of fleſh intercepts the ſight of: man, who is ſo long a child, and by ſuch ſlow ſteps arrives to the uſe of reaſon, and by that time he has got a little knowledge, and is earneſtly ſeeking after more; by that time he knows what it is to be a man, and to what purpoſe he ought to live; what God is, and how much he is bound to love and worſhip him; while he is ennobling his ſoul with all heavenly qualities and virtues, and copying out the divine image; when the glories of human nature begin to appear, and to ſhine in him; that is, when he is moſt fit to live, to ſerve God and men; then, I ſay, either this mortal nature decays, and duſt returns to its duſt again, or ſome violent diſtemper or evil accident cuts him off in a vigorous age: and when with great labour and induſtry he is become fit to live,

he muſt live no longer. How is it poſſible to reconcile this with the wiſdom of God, if man periſhes when he dies, if he ceaſes to be as ſoon as he comes to be a man? And therefore we have reaſon to believe that death only tranſlates us into another world, where the beginnings of wiſdom and virtue here grow up to perfection: and if that be a more happy place than this world, as you have already heard, we have no reaſon to quarrel that we live ſo little a while here: for, ſetting aſide the miſeries and calamities, the troubles and inconveniences of this life, which the happieſt men are expoſed to (for our experience tells us that there is no compleat and unmixed happineſs here); ſetting aſide that this world is little elſe than a ſcene of miſery to a great part of mankind, who ſtruggle with want and poverty, labour under the oppreſſions of men, or the pains and ſickneſſes of diſeaſed bodies; yet if we were as happy as this world could make us, we ſhould have no reaſon to complain that we muſt exchange it for a much greater happineſs. We now call it death to leave this world; but were we once out of it, and inſtated in the happineſs of the next, we ſhould think it were dying indeed to come into it again. We read of none of the apoſtles who did ſo paſſionately

paſſionately deſire to be diſſolved, and to be with Chriſt, as St Paul; and there was ſome reaſon for it, becauſe he had a taſte of that happineſs, being ſnatch'd up into the third heavens. Indeed, could we ſee the glories of that place, it would make us impatient of living here; and poſſibly that is one reaſon why they are concealed from us. But yet reaſon tells us, that if death tranſlates us to a better place, the ſhortneſs of our lives here is an advantage to us, if we take care to ſpend them well; for we ſhall be the ſooner poſſeſſed of a much happier life.

III. From this notion of death, That it is our leaving this world, I obſerve farther what this life is, only a ſtate of growth and improvement, of trial and probation for the next. There can be no doubt of this, if we conſider what the ſcripture tells us of it, That we ſhall be rewarded in the next world, as we have behaved ourſelves in this: that we ſhall receive according to what we have done in the body, whether good or evil: which proves that this life is only in order to the next; that our eternal happineſs or miſery ſhall bear proportion to the good or evil which we have done here. And when we only conſider, that after a ſhort continuance here, man muſt be removed out of this world, if we

believe that he does not utterly periſh when he dies, but ſtill ſubſiſts in another ſtate, we have reaſon to believe that this life is only a preparation for the next: for why ſhould a man come into this world, and afterwards be removed into another, if this world had no relation nor ſubordination to the next? Indeed, it is evident that man is an improveable creature, not created at firſt in the utmoſt perfection of his nature, nor put into the happieſt ſtate he is capable of, but trained up to perfection and happineſs by degrees. Adam himſelf, in a ſtate of innocence, was but upon his good behaviour, was but a probationer for immortality, which he forfeited for his ſin; and, as I obſerved before, it is moſt probable that had he continued innocent, and refined and exalted his nature by the practice of divine virtues, he ſhould not have lived always in this world; but have been tranſlated into heaven. And I cannot ſee how it is inconſiſtent with the wiſdom of God, to make ſome creatures in a ſtate of probation: that as the angelical nature was created ſo pure at firſt, as to be fit to live in heaven; ſo man, though an earthly, yet a reaſonable creature, might be in a capacity, by the improvement of his natural powers, of advancing himſelf thither. As it became the manifold wiſ-

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dom of God to create the earth as well as the heavens, ſo it became his wiſdom to make man to inhabit this earth; for it was not fitting that any part of the world ſhould be deſtitute of reaſonable beings, to know and adore their Maker, and to aſcribe to him the glory of his works. But then ſince a reaſonable nature is capable of greater improvements than to live always in this world, it became the divine goodneſs to make this world only a ſtate of probation and diſcipline for the next; that thoſe who by a long and conſtant practice of virtue had ſpiritualized their natures into a divine purity, might aſcend into heaven, which is the true center of all intelligent beings. This ſeems to be the original intention of God in making man; and then this earthly life was from the beginning but a ſtate of growth and improvement, to make us fit for heaven, though without dying.

But to be ſure the ſcene is much altered now: for Adam by his ſin made himſelf mortal, and corrupted his own nature, and propagated a mortal and corrupt nature to his poſterity; and therefore we have no natural right to immortality, nor can we refine our ſouls into ſuch a divine purity as is fit for heaven, by the weakened and corrupted powers of nature. But what

we cannot do, Chriſt has done for us; he has purchaſed immortality for us by his death, and quickens and raiſes us into a new life by his ſpirit: but ſince we muſt die, before we are immortal, it is more plain than ever, that this life is only in order to the next, and that the great buſineſs we have to do in this world, is to prepare ourſelves for immortality and glory.

Now if our life in this world be only in order to another life, we ought not to expect our compleat happineſs here; for we are only in the way to it; we muſt finiſh the work God has given us to do in this world, and expect our reward in the next; and if our reward cannot be had in this world, we may conclude that there is ſomething much better in the next world than any thing here.

If this life be our time to work in, we ſhould not conſult our eaſe and ſoftneſs, and pleaſures here; for this is a place of labour and diligence, not of reſt: we are travelling to heaven, and muſt have our eye on our journey's end, and not hunt after pleaſures and diverſions in the way.

The great end of living in this world, is to be happy in the next; and therefore we muſt wiſely improve preſent things, that they may turn to our future account;

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muſt make to ourſelves friends of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlaſting habitations. What concerns a better life, muſt take up moſt of our thoughts and care; and whatever endangers our future happineſs, muſt be rejected with all its charms. It would not be worth the while to live ſome few years here, were we not to live for ever; and therefore it becomes a wiſe man, who remembers that he muſt ſhortly leave this world, to make his preſent life wholly ſubſervient to his future happineſs.

SECT. II.

The ſecond Notion of Death, that it is our putting off theſe bodies.

II. LET us now conſider Death as it is our putting off theſe bodies; for this is the proper notion of death, the ſeparation of ſoul and body, that the body returns to duſt, the ſoul or ſpirit unto God who gave it. When we die, we do not ceaſe to be, nor ceaſe to live, but only ceaſe to live in theſe earthly bodies; the vital union between ſoul and body is to be diſſolved, we are no longer encloiſtered in a tabernacle of fleſh, we no longer feel the impreſſions

impreſſions of it, neither the pains nor pleaſures of the body can affect us, it can charm, it can tempt no longer. This needs no proof, but very well deſerves our moſt ſerious meditation.

For, 1. This teaches us the difference and diſtinction between ſoul and body, which men who are ſunk into fleſh and ſenſe are apt to forget; nay, to loſe the very notion and belief of it: all their delights are fleſhly, they know no other pleaſures but what their five ſenſes furniſh them with; they cannot raiſe their thoughts above this body, nor entertain any noble deſigns, and therefore they imagine that they are nothing but fleſh and blood, a little organized and animated clay: and it is no great wonder, that men who feel the workings and motions of no higher principle of life in them but fleſh and ſenſe, ſhould imagine that they are nothing but fleſh themſelves. Though, methinks, when we ſee the ſenſeleſs and putrifying remains of a brave man before us, it is hard to conceive that this is all of him; that this is the thing which ſome few hours ago could reaſon and diſcourſe, was fit to govern a kingdom, or to inſtruct mankind, could deſpiſe fleſh and ſenſe, and govern all his bodily appetites and inclinations, and was adorned with all divine graces and virtues,

virtues, was the glory and pride of the age: and is this dead carcaſe, which we now ſee, the whole of him? or was there a more divine inhabitant, which animated this earthly machine, which gave life, and beauty, and motion to it, but is now removed?

To be ſure, thoſe who believe that death does not put an end to their being, but only removes them out of this body, which rots in the grave, while their ſouls ſurvive, live, and act, and may be happy in a ſeparate ſtate, ſhould carefully conſider this diſtinction betwixt ſoul and body, which would teach them a moſt divine and heavenly wiſdom.

For when we conſider, that we conſiſt of ſoul and body, which are the two diſtinct parts of man, this will teach us to take care of both. For can any man, who believes he has a ſoul, be concerned only for his body? A compound creature cannot be happy, unleſs both parts of him enjoy their proper pleaſures. He who enjoys only the pleaſures of the body, is never the happier for having a human and reaſonable ſoul: the ſoul of a beaſt would have done as well, and it may be, better; for brute creatures reliſh bodily pleaſures as much, and it may be more, than men do; and reaſon is very troubleſome to

thoſe men who reſolve to live like brutes; for it makes them aſhamed and afraid, which in many caſes hinders, or at leaſt allays, their pleaſures. And why ſhould not a man deſire the full and entire happineſs of a man? why ſhould he deſpiſe any part of himſelf, and that, as you ſhall hear preſently, the beſt part too? and therefore, at leaſt, we ought to take as much care of our ſouls as of our bodies. Do we adorn our bodies, that we may be fit to be ſeen, and to converſe with men, and may receive thoſe reſpects which are due to our quality and good fortune; and ſhall we not adorn our ſouls too with thoſe Chriſtian graces, which make us lovely in the ſight of God and men? the ornament of a meek and quiet ſpirit, which is in the ſight of God of great price; which St Peter eſpecially recommends to Chriſtian women, as a more valuable ornament than the outward adorning of "plaiting "the hair, or wearing gold, or putting "on apparel," 1 *Pet.* iii. 3, 4. the ornaments of wiſdom and prudence, of well governed paſſions, of goodneſs and charity, which give a grace and beauty to all our actions, and ſuch a pleaſing and charming air to our very countenance, as the moſt natural beauty, or artificial waſhes and paints can never imitate.

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Are we careful to preſerve our bodies from any hurt, from pains and ſickneſs, from burning fevers, or the racking gout or ſtone; and ſhall we not be as careful of the eaſe of the mind too? to quiet and calm thoſe paſſions, which, when they grow outragious, are leſs tolerable than all natural or artificial tortures; to moderate thoſe deſires which rage like hunger and thirſt, thoſe fears which convulſe the mind with trembling and paralitic motions, thoſe furious tempeſts of anger, revenge and envy, which ruffle our minds, and fill us with vexation, reſtleſſneſs and confuſion of thoughts; eſpecially thoſe guilty reflections upon ourſelves, that worm in the conſcience, which gnaws the ſoul, and torments us with ſhame, and remorſe, and dreadful expectations of an avenger. Theſe are the ſickneſſes and diſtempers of the ſoul: theſe are pains indeed; more ſharp, and pungent, and killing pains than our bodies are capable of. "The ſpirit of a man "can bear his infirmity:" natural courage, or the powers of reaſon, or the comforts of religion, can ſupport us under all our ſufferings; "but a wounded ſpirit who "can bear?" and therefore a man who loves eaſe ſhould in the firſt place take care of the eaſe of his mind, for that will make all

all other sufferings easy; but nothing can support a man whose mind is wounded.

Are we fond of bodily pleasures? are we ready to purchase them at any rate? and if we be men why should we despise the pleasures of the mind? if we have souls, why should we not reap the benefit and the pleasures of them? do you think there are no pleasures proper to the soul? have we souls that are good for nothing? or of no use to us, but only to relish the pleasures of the body? Ask those who have tried, what the pleasures of wisdom and knowledge are, which do as much excel the pleasures of seeing, as truth is more beautiful and glorious than the sun: ask them what a pleasure it is to know God, the greatest and best being, and the brightest object of our minds; to contemplate his wisdom, and goodness, and power in the works of creation and providence; to be swallowed up in that stupendous mystery of love, the redemption of sinners by the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God? ask them what the pleasures of innocence and virtue are; what the feast of a good conscience means; which is the greatest happiness, to give or to receive; what the joys even of sufferings and persecutions, of want and poverty, and reproach are for the sake of Christ? ask a devout soul, what

tranſports and raviſhment of ſpirit he feels, when he is upon his knees, when with St Paul he is even ſnatched up into the third heavens, filled with God, overflowing with praiſes and divine joys? and does it not then become a man, who has a reaſonable ſoul, to ſeek after theſe rational, theſe manly, theſe divine pleaſures, the pleaſures of the mind and ſpirit, which are proper and peculiar to a reaſonable creature? let him do this, and then let him enjoy the pleaſures of the body as much as he can, which will be very inſipid and taſteleſs, when his ſoul is raviſhed with more noble delights.

In a word, if we are ſo careful to preſerve the life of our bodies, which we know muſt die, and rot and putrify in the grave, methinks we ſhould not be leſs careful to preſerve the life of our ſouls, which is the only immortal part of us. For tho' our ſouls cannot die, as our bodies do, yet they may be miſerable, and that is called eternal death, where the worm never dieth, and the fire never goeth out. For to be always miſerable, is infinitely worſe than not to be at all; and therefore is the moſt formidable death. And if we are ſo unwilling to part with theſe mortal bodies, we ought in reaſon to be much more afraid to loſe our ſouls.

2. That death is our putting off theſe bodies, teaches us, that the ſoul is the only principle of life and ſenſation. The body cannot live without the ſoul; but as ſoon as it is parted from it, it loſes all ſenſe and motion, and returns to its original duſt: but the ſoul can and does live without the body, and therefore there is the principle of life. This may be thought a very common and obvious obſervation; and indeed ſo it is; but the conſequences of this are not ſo commonly obſerved, and yet are of great uſe and moment.

For, (1.) This ſhews us, that the ſoul is the beſt part of us, that the ſoul indeed is the man, becauſe it is the only ſeat of life, and knowledge, and all ſenſations: for a man is a living, reaſonable and underſtanding being; and therefore a living, reaſonable ſoul (not an earthly body, which hath no life or ſenſe but what it derives from the ſoul) muſt be the man. Hence in ſcripture *ſoul* ſo frequently ſignifies the man. Thus we read of the ſouls that were born to Jacob, and the ſouls that came with him into Egypt, *Gen.* xlvi. that is, his ſons. And ſoul ſignifies ourſelves: "a friend which "is as thy own ſoul;" that is, as dear to us as ourſelves, *Deut.* xiii. 6. "and Jona-"than loved David as his own ſoul;" that is, as himſelf, 1 *Sam.* xviii. 3. For, in propriety

propriety of ſpeech, the body has no ſenſe at all, but the ſoul lives in the body, and feels all the motions and impreſſions of it; ſo that it is the ſoul only that is capable of happineſs or miſery, of pain or pleaſure: and therefore it is the only concernment of a wiſe man to take care of his own ſoul; as our Saviour tells us, "What ſhall it profit a man, tho' he ſhould gain the whole "world, and loſe his own ſoul? or what "ſhall a man give in exchange for his "ſoul?" *Mat.* xvi. 26. The reaſon of which is eaſily apprehended, when we remember that the ſoul only is capable of happineſs or miſery; that it is the ſoul which muſt enjoy every thing elſe. And what can the whole world then ſignify to him who has no ſoul to enjoy it, whoſe ſoul is condemned to endleſs and eternal miſeries? Such a miſerable ſoul is as uncapable of enjoying the world, or any thing in it, as if it had loſt its being.

(2.) Hence we learn the true notion of bodily pleaſures, that they are ſuch pleaſures as the ſoul feels by its union to the body; for it is not the body that feels the pleaſures but the ſoul, tho' the body be the inſtrument of them. And therefore, how fond ſoever we are of them, we may certainly conclude, that bodily pleaſures are the meaneſt pleaſures of human nature;

becauſe the union to theſe earthly bodies is the meaneſt and moſt deſpicable ſtate of reaſonable ſouls. Theſe are not its proper and genuine pleaſures, which muſt reſult from its own nature and powers; but are only external impreſſions, the light and ſuperficial touches of matter: and it would be very abſurd to conceive, that the ſoul, which is the only ſubject of pleaſure, ſhould have no pleaſures of its own, but borrow its whole happineſs from its affinity and alliance to matter; or that its greateſt pleaſures ſhould be owing to external impreſſions, not to the acting of its own natural faculties and powers: which may convince us, as I obſerved before, that the pleaſures of the mind are much the greateſt and nobleſt pleaſures of the man; and he who would be truly happy, muſt ſeek for it not in bodily entertainments, but in the improvements and exerciſes of reaſon and religion.

(3.) Hence we learn alſo, that the body was made for the ſoul, not the ſoul for the body; as that which in itſelf has no life and ſenſe, is made for the uſe of that which has. The body is only a convenient habitation for the ſoul in this world, an inſtrument of action, and a trial and exerciſe of virtue: but the ſoul is to uſe the body, and to govern it, to taſte its pleaſures,

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and to ſet bounds to them, to make the body ſerviceable to the ends and purpoſes of reaſon and virtue, not to ſubject reaſon to paſſion and ſenſe. If the body was made for the uſe of the ſoul, it was never intended the ſoul ſhould wholly conform itſelf to it, and by its ſympathy with corporeal paſſions, transform itſelf into a ſenſual and brutiſh nature. Such degenerate creatures are thoſe who live only to ſerve the body; who value nothing elſe, and ſeek for nothing elſe, but how to gratify their appetites and luſts; which is to invert the order of nature, to fall in love with their ſlaves, and change fortunes and ſhackles with them: ſo that our Saviour might well ſay, "he that committeth ſin "is the ſervant of ſin;" for this is a vile and unnatural ſubjection, to ſerve the body, which was made to ſerve the ſoul: ſuch men ſhall receive the reward of ſlaves, to be turned out of God's family, and not to inherit with ſons and freemen; as our Saviour adds, "The ſervant abideth not "in the houſe for ever, but the ſon abi-"deth for ever. If the Son therefore "ſhall make you free, ye ſhall be free in-"deed." *John* viii. 31, 32.

3. That death, which is our leaving this world, is nothing elſe but our putting off theſe bodies, teaches us, that it is only

our union to theſe bodies which intercepts the ſight of the other world; the other world is not at ſuch a diſtance from us as we imagine: the throne of God, indeed, is at a great remove from this earth, above the third heavens, where he diſplays his glory to thoſe bleſſed ſpirits which encompaſs his throne: but as ſoon as we ſtep out of theſe bodies, we ſtep into the other world; which is not ſo properly another world, (for there is the ſame heaven and earth ſtill) as a new ſtate of life. To live in theſe bodies, is to live in this world; to live out of them, is to remove into the next. For while our ſouls are confined to theſe bodies, and can look only through theſe material caſements, nothing but what is material can affect us, nay, nothing but what is groſs, that can reflect light, and convey the ſhapes and colours of things with it to the eye. So that though within this viſible world there be a more glorious ſcene of things than what appears to us, we perceive nothing at all of it; for this veil of fleſh parts the viſible and inviſible world. But when we put off theſe bodies, there are new and ſurpriſing wonders preſent themſelves to our view; when theſe material ſpectacles are taken off, the ſoul with its own naked eyes ſees what was inviſible before: and then we are in the

the other world, when we can ſee it, and converſe with it. Thus St Paul tells us, that "when we are at home in the body, "we are abſent from the Lord; but when "we are abſent from the body, we are "preſent with the Lord," 2 *Cor.* v. 6, 8. And methinks this is enough to cure us of our fondneſs for theſe bodies, unleſs we think it more deſirable to be confined to a priſon, and to look through a grate all our lives, which gives us but a very narrow proſpect, and that none of the beſt neither, than to be ſet at liberty to view all the glories of the world. What would we give now for the leaſt glimpſe of that inviſible world, which the firſt ſtep we take out of theſe bodies will preſent us with? There are ſuch things "as eye hath not "ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath it en-"tered into the heart of man to conceive." Death opens our eyes, enlarges our proſpect, preſents us with a new and more glorious world, which we can never ſee while we are ſhut up in fleſh; which ſhould make us as willing to part with this veil, as to take the film off our eyes which hinders our ſight.

4. If we muſt put off theſe bodies, methinks we ſhould not much glory nor pride ourſelves in them, nor ſpend too much of our time about them: for why

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ſhould that be our pride, why ſhould that be our buſineſs, which we muſt ſhortly part with? And yet, as for pride, theſe mortal corruptible bodies, and what relates to them, adminiſter moſt to the occaſions of it.

Some men glory in their birth, and in their deſcent from noble anceſtors, and ancient families: which, beſide the vanity of it, for if we trace our pedigree to their original, 'tis certain that all our families are equally ancient and equally noble, for we deſcend all from Adam; and in ſuch a long deſcent as this, no man can tell whether there have not been beggars and princes in thoſe which are the nobleſt and meaneſt families now: yet, I ſay, what is all this, but to pride ourſelves in our bodies, and our own deſcent, unleſs men think that their ſouls are derived from their parents too? Indeed our birth is ſo very ignoble, whatever our anceſtors are, or however it may be diſſembled with ſome pompous circumſtances, that no man has any reaſon to glory in it; for the greateſt prince is born like the wild aſs's colt. Others glory in their external beauty: which, how great and charming ſoever it be, is but the beauty of the body, which, if it be ſpared by ſickneſs and old age, muſt periſh in the grave. Death will ſpoil

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thoſe features and colours which are now admired; and after a ſhort time, there will be no diſtinction between this beautiful body and common duſt. Others are guilty of greater vanity than this, and what nature has denied they ſupply by art; they adorn their bodies with richer attire, and many times ſuch bodies as will not be adorned; and then they glory in their borrowed feathers: but what a ſorry beauty is that which they cannot carry into the other world? and if they muſt leave their bodies in the grave, I think, there will be no great occaſion in the other world for their rich and ſplendid apparel, which will not fit a ſoul.

Thus, what do riches ſignify, but to miniſter to the wants, conveniences and pleaſures of the body? And therefore, to pride ourſelves in riches is to glory in the body too, to think ourſelves more conſiderable than other men, becauſe we can provide better for our bodies than they can. And what a mean and contemptible vice is pride, whoſe ſubject and occaſion is ſo mean and contemptible! to pride ourſelves in theſe bodies, who have ſo ignoble an extraction, are of ſo ſhort a continuance, and will have ſo ignoble an end, muſtly down in the grave, and be food for worms!

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As for the care of our bodies, that muſt unavoidably take up great part of our time, to ſupply the neceſſities of nature, and to provide the conveniences of life; but this may be for the good of our ſouls too, as honeſt labour and induſtry, and ingenious arts are: but for men to ſpend their whole time in ſloth and luxury, in eating, and drinking, and ſleeping, in dreſſing and adorning their bodies, or gratifying their luſts; this is to be vile ſlaves and ſervants to the body, to bodies which neither need or deſerve this from us; after all our care they will tumble into duſt, and commonly much the ſooner for our indulgence of them.

5. If death be our putting off theſe bodies, then it is certain that we muſt live without theſe bodies till the reſurrection; nay, that we muſt always live without ſuch bodies as theſe are: for though our bodies ſhall riſe again, yet they ſhall be changed and transformed into a ſpiritual nature, as St Paul expreſly tells us, 1 *Cor.* xv. 42, 43, 45. "It is ſown in corruption, "it is raiſed in incorruption; it is ſown "in diſhonour, it is raiſed in glory; it is "ſown in weakneſs, it is raiſed in power; "it is ſown a natural body, it is raiſed a "ſpiritual body:" for as he adds, ver. 50. "fleſh and blood cannot inherit the "kingdom

"kingdom of God, neither can corrup-
"tion inherit incorruption." Which is true of a fleſhly ſoul; but here is underſtood of a body of fleſh and blood, which is of a corruptible nature; as our reaſon may ſatisfy us, that ſuch groſs earthly bodies as we now carry about with us cannot live and ſubſiſt in thoſe pure regions of light and glory which God inhabits, no more than you can lodge a ſtone in the air, or breathe nothing but pure æther: and therefore our glorified bodies will have none of theſe earthly paſſions which theſe earthly bodies have, will reliſh none of the pleaſures of fleſh and blood: and upon this account we may truly ſay, that when we once put off theſe bodies, we ſhall ever after live without them.

Now the uſe of this obſervation is ſo very obvious, that methinks no man can miſs it: for when we conſider that we muſt put off theſe bodies, and for ever live without them, the very next thought in courſe is, that we ought to live without our bodies now, as much as poſſibly we can, while we do live in them; to have but very little commerce with fleſh and ſenſe; to wean ourſelves from all bodily pleaſures; to ſtifle its appetites and inclinations, and to bring them under perfect command and government; that, when

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we ſee it fit, we may uſe bodily pleaſures without fondneſs, or let them alone without being uneaſy for want of them; that is, that we may govern all our bodily appetites, not they govern us.

For a wiſe man ſhould thus reaſon with himſelf: If I grow ſo fond of this body, and the pleaſures of it, if I can reliſh no other pleaſures, if I value nothing elſe, what ſhall I do when I leave this body? for bodily pleaſures can laſt no longer than my body does: what ſhall I do in the next world, when I ſhall be ſtripped of this body, when I ſhall be a naked ſoul; or, whatever other covering I may have, ſhall have no fleſh and blood about me? and therefore all the pleaſures I value now, will then vaniſh like a dream; for it is impoſſible to enjoy bodily pleaſures when I have no body. And tho' there were no other puniſhments in the next life, yet it is a great pain to me now, to have my deſires diſappointed or delayed: and ſhould I retain the ſame fondneſs for theſe things in the next world, where they cannot be had, the eternal deſpair of enjoying them would be puniſhment enough.

Indeed we cannot tell what alteration our putting off theſe bodies will make in the temper and diſpoſition of our minds.

We ſee that a long and ſevere fit of ſickneſs, while it laſts, will make men abſolute philoſophers, and give them a great contempt of bodily pleaſures; nay, will make the very thoughts of thoſe pleaſures nauſeous to them, which they were very fond of in health. Long faſting and abſtinence, and other bodily ſeverities, are an excellent means to alter the habits and inclinations of the mind: and one would think, that to be ſeparated from theſe bodies muſt needs make a greater alteration in our minds than either ſickneſs or bodily ſeverities. I dare not ſay, that a ſenſual man, when he is ſeparated from this body, ſhall feel the ſame ſenſual deſires and inclinations which he had in it, and ſhall be tormented with a violent thirſt after thoſe pleaſures which he cannot enjoy in a ſeparate ſtate; but this I dare ſay, that a man who is wholly ſunk into fleſh and ſenſe, and reliſhes no other pleaſures, is not capable of living happily out of his body, unleſs you could find out a new ſcene of material and ſenſible pleaſures to entertain him: for though the particular appetites and inclinations of the body may ceaſe, yet his very ſoul is ſenſualized, and therefore is incapable of the pleaſures of a ſpiritual life.

For indeed, ſetting aſide that miſchief

which the unruly luſts and appetites of men, and the immoderate uſe of bodily pleaſures, does either to the perſons themſelves, or to public ſocieties; and the true reaſon why we muſt mortify our ſenſual inclinations, is to improve our minds in all divine graces: for the fleſh and the ſpirit cannot thrive together; ſenſual and ſpiritual joys are ſo contrary to each other, that which of them ſoever prevails, according to the degrees of its prevalence, it ſtifles and ſuppreſſes, or wholly ſubdues the other. A ſoul which is raviſhed with the love of God, and the bleſſed Jeſus, tranſported with the ſpiritual hopes of another life, which feels the paſſions of devotion, and is enamoured with the glories and beauties of holineſs and divine virtues, muſt have ſuch a very mean opinion of fleſh and ſenſe, as will make it diſguſt bodily pleaſures, or be very indifferent about them: and a ſoul which is under the government of ſenſe and paſſion, cannot taſte thoſe more intellectual and divine joys; for it is our eſteem of things which gives a reliſh to them, and it is impoſſible we can highly eſteem one, without depreciating and undervaluing the other. It is univerſally true in this caſe, what our Saviour tells us, "No man can ſerve two maſters; "for either he will hate the one, and love "the

"the other; or elſe he will hold to the "one, and deſpiſe the other: ye cannot "ſerve God and Mammon." *Matth* vi. 24.

The leaſt beginnings of a divine nature in us, is to love God above all the world: and as we every day grow more devoutly and paſſionately in love with God, and take greater pleaſure in the ſpiritual acts of religion, in praiſing God and contemplating the divine nature and perfections, and meditating on the ſpiritual glories of another life; ſo we abate of our value for preſent things, till we get a perfect conqueſt and maſtery of them. But he who is perfectly devoted to the pleaſures of the body and ſervice of his luſts, has no ſpiritual life in him; and though putting off theſe bodies may cure our bodily appetites and paſſions, yet it cannot give us a new principle of life, nor work an eſſential change in a fleſhly nature: and therefore ſuch a man, when he is removed from this body and all the enjoyments of it, is capable of no other happineſs; nay, though we are renewed by the divine ſpirit, and have a principle of a new life in us, yet, according to the degree of our love to preſent things, ſo much the more indiſpoſed are we for the happineſs of unbodied ſpirits.

And therefore, ſince we muſt put off theſe bodies, if we would live for ever happily

pily without them, we muſt begin betimes to ſhake off matter and ſenſe, to govern our bodily appetites and paſſions, to grow indifferent to the pleaſures of ſenſe, to uſe them for the refreſhment and neceſſities of nature, but not to be over-curious about them, not to be fond of enjoying them, nor troubled for the want of them; never to indulge ourſelves in unlawful pleaſures, and to be very temperate in our uſe of lawful ones. To be ſure we muſt take care, that the ſpiritual part, that the ſenſe of God and of religion be always predominant in us; and this will be a principle of life in us, a principle of divine ſenſations and joys when this body ſhall tumble into duſt.

6. If death be our putting off theſe bodies, then the reſurrection from the dead is the re-union of ſoul and body: the ſoul does not die, and therefore cannot be ſaid to riſe again from the dead; but it is the body, which like ſeed falls into the earth, and ſprings up again more beautiful and glorious at the reſurrection of the juſt. To believe the reſurrection of the body or of the fleſh, and to believe another life after this, are two very different things. The heathens believed a future ſtate, but never dreamed of the reſurrection of the body, which is the peculiar article of the Chriſtian faith. And yet it is the reſur-

rection

rection of our bodies which is our victory and triumph over death: for death was the punishment of Adam's sin; and those who are in a separate state still suffer the curse of the law, "Dust thou art, and un-" to dust thou shalt return." Christ came to deliver us from this curse, by being made a curse for us; that is, to deliver us from death by dying for us. But no man can be said to be delivered from death, till his body rise again, for part of him is under the power of death still, while his body rots in the grave; nay, he is properly in a state of death, while he is in a state of separation of soul and body, which is the true notion of death; and therefore St Paul calls the resurrection of the body the destroying death, 1 *Cor.* xv. 25, 26. "He must reign till he hath put "all enemies under his feet: the last ene-"my that shall be destroyed is death;" that is, by the resurrection of the dead, as appears from the whole scope of the place, and is particularly expressed ver. 54, 55, *&c.* "So when this corruptible shall have put "on incorruption, and this mortal shall "have put on immortality, then shall be "brought to pass that saying which is "written, Death is swallowed up in vic-"tory. O death, where is thy sting! O "grave, where is thy victory! The sting

" of death is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin " is the law: but bleſſed be God who " hath given us the victory, through our " Lord Jeſus Chriſt." This is the perfection and conſummation of our reward; when our bodies ſhall be raiſed incorruptible and glorious, when Chriſt ſhall change our vile bodies, and make them like to his own moſt glorious body. I doubt not but good men are in a very happy ſtate before the reſurrection, but yet their happineſs is not compleat; for the very ſtate of ſeparation is an imperfect ſtate, becauſe a ſeparate ſoul is not a perfect man: a man, by the original conſtitution of his nature, conſiſts of ſoul and body, and therefore his perfect happineſs requires the united glory and happineſs of both parts of the whole man: which is not conſidered by thoſe who cannot apprehend any neceſſity why the body ſhould riſe again: ſince, as they conceive, the ſoul might be as compleatly and perfectly happy without it. But yet the ſoul would not be an entire and perfect man, for a man conſiſts of ſoul and body: a ſoul in a ſtate of ſeparation, how happy ſoever otherways it may be, has ſtill this mark of God's diſpleaſure on it, that it has loſt its body; and therefore the re-union of our ſouls and bodies has at leaſt this advantage in it,

it, that it is a perfect reſtoring of us to the divine favour, that the badge and memorial of our ſin and apoſtaſy is done away in the reſurrection of our bodies; and therefore this is called the adoption, *viz.* the redemption of our bodies, *Rom.* viii. 23. for then it is that God publicly owns us for his ſons, when he raiſes our dead bodies into a glorious and immortal life. And beſides this, I think we have no reaſon to doubt, but the re-union of ſoul and body will be a new addition of happineſs and glory: for though we cannot gueſs what the pleaſures of glorified bodies are, yet ſure we cannot imagine that when theſe earthly bodies are the inſtruments of ſo many pleaſures, a ſpiritual and glorified body ſhould be of no uſe: a ſoul and body cannot be vitally united, but there muſt be a ſympathy between them, and they receive mutual impreſſions from each other; and then we need not doubt but that ſuch glorified bodies will highly miniſter, though in a way unknown to us, to the pleaſures of a divine and perfect ſoul; will infinitely more contribute to the divine pleaſures of the mind, than theſe earthly bodies do to our ſenſual pleaſures; that all who have this hope and expectation may, as St Paul ſpeaks, "earneſtly groan within themſelves, waiting

"for

" for the adoption, even the redemption " of our bodies," *Rom.* viii. 23. This being the day of the marriage of the Lamb, this conſummates our happineſs, when our bodies and ſouls meet again, not to diſturb and oppoſe each other, as they do in this world, where the fleſh and the ſpirit are at perpetual enmity, but to live in eternal harmony, and to heighten and inflame each other's joy. Now this conſideration, that death being a putting off theſe bodies, the reſurrection of the dead muſt be the raiſing our bodies into a new and immortal life, and the re-union of them to our ſouls, ſuggeſts many uſeful thoughts to us: for,

This teaches us how we are to uſe our bodies, how we are to prepare them for immortality and glory. Death, which is the ſeparation of ſoul and body, is the puniſhment of ſin, and indeed it is the cure of it too; for ſin is ſuch a leproſy as cannot be perfectly cleanſed without pulling down the houſe which it has once infected; but if we would have theſe bodies raiſed up again immortal and glorious, we muſt begin the cleanſing and purification of them here; we muſt " be ſanctified " throughout, both in body, ſoul and ſpirit," 1 *Theſſ.* v. 24. our bodies muſt be the temples of the holy Ghoſt, muſt be holy

holy and conſecrated places, 1 *Cor.* vi. 19. muſt not be polluted with filthy luſts, if we would have them rebuilt again by the divine Spirit, after the deſolations which ſin hath made. Thus St Paul tells us at large, *Rom.* viii. 10, 11, 12, 13. "And "if Chriſt be in you, the body is dead, "becauſe of ſin; but the ſpirit is life, "becauſe of righteouſneſs;" that is, that divine and holy nature which we receive from Chriſt will ſecure the life of our ſouls, and tranſlate us to a happy ſtate after death; but it will not ſecure us from the neceſſity of dying, our bodies muſt die as a puniſhment of ſin, and putrify in the grave; but yet they are not loſt for ever; "for if the Spirit of him that raiſed up "Jeſus from the dead dwell in you, he "that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead ſhall "quicken your mortal bodies, by his "Spirit that dwelleth in you;" that is, if your bodies be cleanſed and ſanctified, be the temples of the holy Spirit, he will raiſe them up again into a new life: "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors "not to the fleſh, to live after the fleſh: "for if ye live after the fleſh, ye ſhall "die; but if ye through the Spirit do "mortify the deeds of the body, ye ſhall "live;" if ye ſubdue the fleſhly principle, if ye bring the fleſh into ſubjection to the

ſpirit,

ſpirit, not only your ſouls ſhall live, but your bodies ſhall be raiſed again to immortal life. And this is a mighty obligation on us, if we love our bodies, and would have them glorious and immortal, not to pamper the fleſh, and gratify its appetites and luſts; "not to yield your "members ſervants to uncleanneſs, and to "iniquity unto iniquity; but to yield "your members ſervants to righteouſneſs, "unto holineſs; that being made free "from ſin, and becoming the ſervants of "God, you may have your fruit unto "holineſs, and the end everlaſting life," as the ſame apoſtle ſpeaks, *Rom.* vi. 19, 22. It is our relation to Chriſt, that our very bodies are his members; it is our relation to the holy Spirit, that our bodies are his temples, which entitles our bodies to a glorious reſurrection: but will Chriſt own ſuch bodies for his members as are members of a harlot? will the holy Spirit dwell in ſuch a temple as is defiled with impure luſts? And therefore ſuch polluted bodies will riſe as they lay down, in diſhonour; will riſe not to immortal life, but to eternal death.

For can we think theſe bodies well prepared for a glorious reſurrection, to be refined into ſpiritual bodies, which are become ten times more fleſh than God made them,

them, which are the inſtruments and the tempters to all impurity? is there any reaſon to expect that ſuch a body ſhould riſe again ſpiritual and glorious, which expires in the flames of luſt, which falls a ſacrifice in the quarrel of a ſtrumpet, which ſinks under the load of its own exceſſes, and eats and drinks itſelf into the grave; which ſcorns to die by Adam's ſin, but will die by its own, without expecting till the laws of mortality, according to the ordinary courſe of nature, muſt take place?

Holineſs is the only principle of immortality both to ſoul and body: thoſe love their bodies beſt, thoſe honour them moſt, who make them inſtruments of virtue, who endeavour to refine and ſpiritualize them, and leave nothing of fleſhly appetites and inclinations in them; thoſe are kindeſt to their bodies, who conſecrate them for immortality, who take care they ſhall riſe again into the partnerſhip of eternal joys. All the ſeverities of mortification, abſtinence from bodily pleaſures, watchings, faſtings, hard lodging, when they are inſtruments of a real virtue, not the arts of ſuperſtition, when they are intended to ſubdue our luſts, not to purchaſe a liberty of ſinning, are the moſt real expreſſions of honour and reſpect to theſe bodies. It

ſhews

ſhews how unwilling we are to part with them, or to have them miſerable, how deſirous we are of their advancement unto eternal glories; for the leſs of fleſh they carry to the grave with them, the more glorious will they riſe again. This is offering up our bodies a living ſacrifice, when we entirely devote them to the ſervice of God; and ſuch living ſacrifices ſhall live for ever; for if God receives them a living ſacrifice, he will preſerve them to immortal life.

But the higheſt honour we can do theſe bodies, and nobleſt uſe we can put them to, is to offer them up, in a proper ſenſe, a ſacrifice to God, that is, willingly and chearfully to die for God, when he calls us to ſuffering; firſt to offer up our ſouls to God in the pure flames of love and devotion, and then freely to give up our bodies to the ſtake or to the gibbet, to wild beaſts, or more ſavage men. This vindicates our bodies from the natural ſhame and reproach of death. What we call a natural death is very inglorious; it is a mark of diſhonour, becauſe it is a puniſhment of ſin; ſuch bodies, at beſt, are ſown in diſhonour and corruption, as St Paul ſpeaks: but to die a martyr, to fall a ſacrifice to God, this is a glorious death; this is not to yield to the laws of mortali-

ty, to neceſſity and fate, but to give back our bodies to God, who gave them to us, and he will keep that which we have committed to his truſt, to a glorious reſurrection: and it will be a ſurpriſing and aſtoniſhing glory with which ſuch bodies ſhall riſe again, as have ſuffered for their Lord; "for if we ſuffer with him, we "ſhall alſo be glorified together;" which ſeems to imply, that thoſe ſhall neareſt reſemble the glory of Chriſt himſelf, who ſuffer as he did.

This is the way to make our bodies immortal and glorious. We cannot keep them long here; they are corruptible bodies, and will tumble into duſt; we muſt part with them for a while, and if ever we expect and deſire a happy meeting again, we muſt uſe them with modeſty and reverence now. We diſhonour our bodies in this world, when we make them inſtruments of wickedneſs and luſt, and lay an eternal foundation of ſhame and infamy for them in the next world: it is a mortal and killing love to cheriſh the fleſhly principle, to make proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof: but if you love your bodies, make them immortal, that though they die, they may riſe again out of their graves with a youthful vigour and beauty: that they may live for ever, without pain and

ſickneſs, without the decays of age, or the interruptions of ſleep, or the fatigue or wearineſs of labour; without wanting either food or raiment, without the leaſt remains of corruption, without knowing what it is to tempt or to be tempted, without the leaſt uneaſy thought, the leaſt diſappointment, the leaſt care, in the full and bliſsful enjoyment of the eternal and ſovereign Good.

SECT. III.

Death conſidered as our entrance upon a new and unknown ſtate of life.

III. LET us now conſider death as it is an entrance upon a new and unknown ſtate of life; for it is a new thing to us to live without theſe bodies, it is what we have never tried yet, and we cannot gueſs how we ſhall feel ourſelves when we are ſtript of fleſh and blood; what entertainments we ſhall find in that place, where there is neither eating nor drinking, neither marrying nor giving in marriage; what kind of buſineſs and employment we ſhall have there, where we ſhall have no occaſion for any of theſe things which employed our time here: for when we have no uſe of food or raiment, or phyſic, or houſes to dwell in, or whatever our union to

to theſe bodies makes neceſſary now, all thoſe trades and arts which are to provide theſe conveniences for us muſt then ceaſe. This muſt needs be a very ſurpriſing change; and though we are aſſured of very great happineſs in the next world, which infinitely exceeds whatever men call happineſs or pleaſure here; yet moſt men are very unwilling to change a known for an unknown happineſs; and it confounds and amazes them to think of going out of theſe bodies, they know not whither. Now this conſideration will ſuggeſt ſeveral very wiſe and uſeful thoughts to us.

(1.) How neceſſary an entire truſt and faith in God is; we cannot live happily without it in this world, and I am ſure we cannot die comfortably without it: for this is the nobleſt exerciſe of faith, to be able chearfully to reſign up our ſpirits into the hands of God, when we know ſo little of the ſtate of the other world whither we are going. This was the trial of Abraham's faith, when, in obedience to the command of God, he forſook his own country, and his father's houſe, and followed God into a ſtrange land, *Heb.* xi. 8. "By "faith Abraham, when he was called to "go into a place which he ſhould after "receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and "he went out not knowing whither he

" went." Canaan was the type of Heaven; and Heaven is as unknown a country to us as Canaan was to Abraham. And herein we muſt imitate the father of the faithful, to be contented to leave our native country, and the world we know, to follow God whitherſoever he leads us, into unknown regions, and to unknown and unexperienced happineſs. This indeed all men muſt do, becauſe they cannot avoid leaving this world, but muſt go when God calls for them. But that which makes it our choice, and an act of faith and virtue, is this, ſuch a ſtrong perſuaſion, and firm reliance on the goodneſs, and wiſdom, and promiſes of God, that tho' we are ignorant of the ſtate of the other world, we can chearfully forſake all our known enjoyments, and embrace the promiſes of an unknown happineſs. And there are two diſtinct acts of this, which anſwer to Abraham's faith in leaving his own country, and following God into a ſtrange land; the firſt is the exerciſe of our faith while we live; the ſecond, when we die.

To mortify all our inordinate appetites and deſires, to deny ourſelves the ſinful vanities and pleaſures of this life, for the promiſes of an unknown happineſs in the next world, is our myſtical dying to this world, leaving our native country, and following God

God into a ſtrange and unknown land; to quit all our preſent poſſeſſions in this world, to forfeit our eſtates or liberties, all that is dear to us here; nay, to forſake our native country, rather than to offend God and loſe our title to the promiſes of an unknown happineſs, is in a literal ſenſe to leave our own country at God's command, not knowing whither we go; which is like Abraham's going out of his own country, and living as a ſojourner in the land of promiſe, without having an inheritance in it. This is that faith which overcomes the world, which makes us pilgrims and ſtrangers here, as thoſe who ſeek for another country, for a heavenly Canaan, as the apoſtle tells us Abraham did: "for by faith he ſojourned "in the land of promiſe, as in a ſtrange "country, dwelling in tabernacles, with "Iſaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the "ſame promiſe: for he looked for a city "which has foundations, whoſe builder "and maker is God." *Heb.* xi. 9, 10.

And when we come to die, and can with joy and triumph, in an aſſurance of God's promiſes, commend our ſpirits to him, and truſt him with our ſouls, when we know not the country we go to, and never experienced what the happineſs of it is, without any concern or ſolicitude about it; this is a noble act of faith, which

does great honour to God, and conquers all the natural averſions to death, and makes it an eaſy thing to leave this world, and the object of our deſire and choice; to ſee that promiſed land, and taſte thoſe pleaſures which we are yet ſtrangers to. We muſt live, and we muſt die in faith too, as the patriarchs did, who all died in faith, not having received the promiſes, but ſeeing them afar off: and for that reaſon, the other world muſt be in a great meaſure unknown to us; for could we before-hand taſte the pleaſures of it, or know what they are, it would be no act of faith to leave this world for it, to be willing to be tranſlated from earth to heaven. But no man is worthy of heaven who dares not take God's word for it; and therefore God has concealed theſe glories from us, and given us only a promiſe of a great, but an unknown happineſs, for the object of our hope, to be a trial of our faith, and obedience, and truſt in him.

That the other world is an unknown ſtate to us, trains us up to a great truſt and confidence in God: for we muſt truſt God for our ſouls, and for the next world; and this naturally teaches us to truſt God in this world too, to live ſecurely upon his providence, and to ſuffer him to diſpoſe of us as he pleaſes.

Indeed

Indeed no man can truſt God in this world, who has not a ſtedfaſt faith in God for the rewards of the next. For the external adminiſtrations of providence are not always what we could wiſh; but good men are very well contented, and have great reaſon to be ſo, to take this world and the next together; and therefore are not ſolicitous about preſent things, but leave God to chuſe what condition for them he pleaſes, as being well aſſured of his goodneſs, who has prepared for them eternal rewards.

And thoſe who can truſt God with their ſouls, who can truſt him for an immortal life, for an unſeen and unknown happineſs, will find no difficulty in truſting him for this world; I mean thoſe who are concerned for their future happineſs, and take any care of their ſouls. If all who are unconcerned for their ſouls, and never trouble their heads what will become of them hereafter, may be ſaid to truſt God with their ſouls, then, I confeſs, this will not hold true; for the greateſt number of thoſe who thus truſt God with their ſouls, will truſt him for nothing elſe. But this is not to truſt God, but to be careleſs of our ſouls. But now, when a man who ſtedfaſtly believes another life after this, and is heartily concerned what will

will become of him for ever, can ſecurely rely on God's promiſes, beyond his own knowledge and proſpect of things; he will very eaſily truſt God for every thing elſe: for he is not ſo ſolicitous about any thing in this world as he is for his ſoul; and if he can truſt God with his deareſt intereſts, ſurely he will truſt him in leſs matters. The promiſes of eternal life through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt are the higheſt demonſtrations of God's love to us; and he who is ſo well aſſured of God's love, that he can truſt him for heaven, can never diſtruſt his care and providence in this world. The method of God's providence can never be ſo unknown to us in this world, as the ſtate of the other world is unknown; and if we can chearfully follow God into an unſeen and unknown world, cannot we be contented to follow him through the moſt dark and perplexed tracts of providence here? So that we have as little reaſon to complain that the ſtate of the other world is unknown to us, as we have, that we muſt live by faith in this world; for abſent, unſeen and unknown things are the objects of our faith. And thoſe who will truſt God no farther than they can ſee, neither in this world, nor in the next, have no reaſon to depend upon

upon his providence here, nor to expect heaven hereafter.

(2.) The ſtate of the other world being ſo much unknown to us, is a very good reaſon why we ſhould chearfully comply with all the terms and conditions of the goſpel; to do whatever our Saviour requires, that we may obtain eternal life. This, it may be, you will not ſo readily apprehend, and yet the reaſon of it is very plain; for ſince the ſtate of the other world is ſo much unknown to us, we do not and cannot know, neither, what diſpoſitions, and habits, and complexion of ſoul are neceſſary to fit and qualify us for this unknown happineſs. But our Saviour, who knew what that ſtate is, knew alſo what is neceſſary to that ſtate; and therefore the wiſeſt courſe we can take is to obey all his laws without any diſpute, not only as the conditions of happineſs without which we ſhall not be admitted into heaven, but as the neceſſary preparation for it. As, to explain this by a parallel caſe, which you will eaſily underſtand; ſuppoſe we had pre-exiſted in a former ſtate, as ſome ſay we did, before we came into theſe bodies, and before we knew any thing of this world, or what the pleaſures and entertainments of it are, ſhould have been told what kind of bodies we muſt go into, no doubt but there would

would have been wonderful wiſe diſputes about the make and frame of our bodies; we ſhould have thought ſome parts ſuperfluous, or uſeleſs, or ill contrived; indeed ſhould have wondered what ſuch a body was made for, as well we might before we underſtood the uſe of any part of it. But God, who knew what he intended us for, provided ſuch a body for us as is both beautiful and uſeful; and we cannot want any part of it, but we are deprived of ſome conveniences and pleaſures of life. And thus we may eaſily ſuppoſe it to be with reference to the next world, that the habits and tempers of our minds are as neceſſary to reliſh the pleaſures of that ſtate, as our bodily ſenſes are to taſte bodily pleaſures: and ſince we do not particularly know what the delights of that ſtate are, and Chriſt does, we ought as perfectly to reſign up ourſelves to his directions for the faſhioning our minds, as we truſt God to form our bodies for us. Whatever graces and virtues he requires us to exerciſe in this world, though we do not ſee the preſent uſe of them, though we may think them an unneceſſary reſtraint of our liberties, and very needleſs and unreaſonable ſeverities; yet we ought to conclude, that Chriſt knew the reaſon of ſuch commands, and that ſuch qualities

qualities and diſpoſitions of mind will be found as neceſſary in the next world, as our bodily ſenſes are here.

And this we ought eſpecially to conclude of ſuch degrees and inſtances of virtue as ſeem above our preſent ſtate, and ſo well fitted to our condition of life in this world: for why ſhould our Saviour give us ſuch laws, and exact ſuch a degree of virtue from us here, as abridges our preſent enjoyments, and, it may be, expoſes us to great inconveniences and ſufferings, were not that temper of mind which theſe virtues form in us, of great uſe and neceſſity in the next life? As for inſtance,

We ſhould think it ſufficient, while we live in this world, where there are ſo many inviting objects, and while we are clothed with bodies of fleſh, which are made for the enjoyments of ſenſe, and have natural appetites and inclinations to them, ſo to govern ourſelves in the uſe of theſe pleaſures, as neither to make ourſelves beaſts, nor to injure our neighbours; and, while we keep within theſe bounds, to gratify our appetites and inclinations to the full. For it is certainly the happineſs of an earthly creature to enjoy this world, though a reaſonable creature muſt do it reaſonably. But not to love this world, ſeems a hard command

to

to a creature who lives in it, and was made to enjoy it; to deſpiſe bodily pleaſures, to ſubdue the fleſhly principle in us, not only to reaſon, but to the ſpirit; to live above the body, and to ſtrive to ſtifle, not only its irregular, but even its natural appetites, and to taſte the pleaſures of it very ſparingly, and with great indifference of mind, ſeems a very hard ſaying to fleſh and blood. We ſhould think it time enough to have our converſation in Heaven, when we come thither; but it is plainly above the ſtate of an earthly creature to live in Heaven, to have all our joys, our hopes, our treaſure and our hearts there. The ſtate of this world would be very happy and proſperous, without ſuch a raiſed, and refined, and ſpiritualized mind; and therefore theſe are ſuch virtues as are not neceſſary to the preſent conſtitution of this world, and therefore can be only in order to the next.

Thus, it is ſufficient to the happineſs and good government of this world, that men do no injury to each other, and that they expreſs mutual civilities and reſpect; that they take care of thoſe whom nature has endeared to them; that they be juſt, and in ordinary caſes helpful to others; and therefore this is all that the ſtate of this world requires. But that

divine and univerſal charity which teaches us to love all men as ourſelves, even our enemies, and thoſe who hate and perſecute us; to forgive the injuries we ſuffer, and not to revenge and retaliate them, not to render evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwiſe bleſſing: I ſay, this wonderful virtue does not only ly extremely croſs to ſelf-love, but it is hardly reconcileable with the ſtate of this world; for the practice of it is very dangerous when we live among bad men, who will take advantage of ſuch a bearing and forgiving virtue, to give great occaſions for the conſtant exerciſe of it; and nothing but a particular providence, which watches over ſuch good men, can ſecure them from being an eaſy prey to the wicked and unjuſt. Nay, we ſee, this is not practicable in the government of the world: civil magiſtrates are forced to puniſh evil doers, or the world would be a bedlam; and therefore thoſe who have thought ſuch public executions of juſtice to be inconſiſtent with this law of forgiving injuries, and not revenging ourſelves, have made it unlawful for Chriſtians to be magiſtrates, becauſe hanging, or whipping, or pillorying malefactors, is not forgiving them, as certainly it is not. A very abſurd doctrine! which makes it neceſſary

that there ſhould always be heathens in every nation, to govern even a Chriſtian kingdom; or that the Chriſtian world ſhould have no government at all, tho' nominal and profeſſed Chriſtians have as much need of government as ever any heathens had. But this forgiving enemies is only a private virtue, not the rule of public government; which ſhews, that the ſtate of this world is ſo far from requiring this virtue, that it will admit only the private exerciſes of it, and that too under the protection of a particular providence, to defend thoſe good men who muſt not avenge themſelves. Now ſuch virtues as the ſtate of this world does not require, we muſt conclude are only in order to the next; and that though we do not ſo well diſcern the reaſon and uſe of this divine charity here, yet this temper of mind is abſolutely neceſſary to the happineſs of the other world; and for that reaſon it is, that Chriſt requires the exerciſe of it now: for we cannot imagine any other reaſon why our Saviour ſhould make any acts of virtue, which the ſtate of this world does not require the preſent exerciſe of, the neceſſary terms and conditions of our future happineſs, but only that ſuch diſpoſitions of mind are as neceſſary to qualify us to reliſh thoſe divine pleaſures, as our bodily

bodily ſenſes are to perceive the delights and pleaſures of this world. This is a mighty obligation on us to obey the laws of our Saviour, as the methods of our advancement to eternal glory: not to diſpute his commands, how uneaſy or unreaſonable ſoever they may now appear; for the reaſons of them are not to be fetched from this world, but from the next; and therefore are ſuch as we cannot ſo well underſtand now, becauſe we know ſo little of the next world; but we may ſafely conclude, that Chriſt knows a reaſon for it, and that we ſhall quickly underſtand the reaſon of it when we come into the other world: and therefore we ſhould endeavour to exerciſe all thoſe heights of virtue which the goſpel recommends to us; for as much as we fall ſhort of theſe, ſo will our glory and happineſs abate in the other world.

(3.) Though the ſtate we enter on at death be in a great meaſure unknown to us, yet this is no reaſonable diſcouragement to good men, no encouragement to the bad. 1. It is no reaſonable diſcouragement to good men; for though we do not know what it is, yet we know it is a great happineſs: ſo it is repreſented to us in ſcripture, as a kingdom, and a crown, an eternal kingdom, and a never-fading crown. Now would any man

be unwilling to leave a mean and homely cottage, to go and take poſſeſſion of a kingdom, becauſe he had never yet ſeen it, tho' he had heard very glorious things of it from very faithful and credible witneſſes? For let us a little conſider in what ſenſe the happineſs of the other world is unknown.

1*ſt*, That it is not ſuch a kind of happineſs as in this world, that it is like nothing which we have ſeen or taſted yet: but a wiſe and good man cannot think this any diſparagement to the other world, though it would have been a real diſparagement to it, had it been like this world; for here is nothing but vanity and vexation of ſpirit, nothing but an empty ſcene, which makes a fine ſhow, but has no real and ſolid joys. Good men have enough of this world, and are ſufficiently ſatisfied that none of theſe things can make them happy; and therefore cannot think it any diſadvantage to change the ſcene, and try ſome unknown and unexperienced joys: for if there be ſuch a thing as happineſs to be found, it muſt be ſomething that they have not known yet, ſomething that this world does not afford.

2*dly*, When we ſay that the ſtate of the other world is unknown, the only meaning of it is, that it is a ſtate of ſuch happineſs, ſo far beyond any thing we ever experienced yet, that we cannot form any notion or idea

idea of it: we know that there is ſuch a happineſs; we know, in ſome meaſure, wherein this happineſs conſiſts, *viz.* in ſeeing God, and the bleſſed Jeſus, who loved us, and gave himſelf for us; in praiſing our great Creator and Redeemer; in converſing with ſaints and angels. But how great, how raviſhing and tranſporting a pleaſure this is, we cannot tell, becauſe we never yet felt it: our dull devotions, our imperfect conceptions of God in this world, cannot help us to gueſs what the joys of heaven are: we know not how the ſight of God, how the thoughts of him, will pierce our ſouls; with what extaſies and raptures we ſhall ſing the ſong of the Lamb; with what melting affections perfect ſouls ſhall embrace; what glories and wonders we ſhall there ſee and know; "ſuch things as nei-
"ther eye hath ſeen, nor ear heard, neither
"hath it entered into the heart of man to
"conceive." Now methinks this ſhould not make the thoughts of death uneaſy to us, ſhould not make us unwilling to go to heaven, that the happineſs of heaven is too great for us to know or to conceive in this world. For,

3*dly*, Men are naturally fond of unknown and untried pleaſures; which is ſo far from being a diſparagement to them, that it raiſes our expectations of them, that they are

unknown. In the things of this world, enjoyment uſually leſſens our eſteem and value for them, and we always value that moſt which we have never tried; and methinks the happineſs of this world ſhould not be the only thing we deſpiſe before we try it. All preſent things are mean, and appear to be ſo when they are enjoyed: but whatever expectations we have of the unknown happineſs of the other world, the enjoyment of it will as much exceed our largeſt expectations, as other things uſually fall below them; and we ſhall be forced to confeſs, with the queen of Sheba, when ſhe ſaw Solomon's glory, that not half of it was told her. It is ſome encouragement to us, that the happineſs of Heaven is too big to be known in this world; for did we perfectly know it now, it could not be very great; and therefore we ſhould entertain ourſelves with the hopes of this unknown happineſs, of thoſe joys which we now have ſuch imperfect conceptions of. 2. Nor is it, on the other hand, any encouragement to bad men, that the miſeries of the other world are unknown; for it is known that God has threatened very terrible puniſhment againſt bad men: and that what theſe puniſhments are is unknown, makes them a great deal more formidable: for who knows the power of God's wrath? who knows

knows how miſerable God can make men? This makes it a ſenſeleſs thing for men to harden themſelves againſt the fears of the other world, becauſe they know not what it is; and how then can they tell, though they could bear up under all known miſeries, but that they may be ſuch puniſhments as they cannot bear? That they are unknown, argues that they are ſomething more terrible than they are acquainted with in this world. They are repreſented indeed by the moſt dreadful and terrible things; by lakes of fire and brimſtone, blackneſs of darkneſs, the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never goeth out. But bad men think this cannot be true in a literal ſenſe; that there can be no fire to burn ſouls, and torment them eternally. Now, ſuppoſe it were ſo, yet, if they believe thoſe threatenings, they muſt believe that ſome terrible thing is ſignified by everlaſting burnings. And if fire and brimſtone ſerve only for metaphors to deſcribe theſe torments by, what will the real ſufferings of the damned be! for the Spirit of God does not uſe to deſcribe things by ſuch metaphors as are greater than the things themſelves. And therefore let no bad man encourage himſelf in ſin, becauſe he does not know what the puniſhments of the other world are. This ſhould poſſeſs us with the greater

greater awe and dread of them, since every thing in the other world, not only the happiness, but the miseries of it, will prove greater, not less than we expect.

CHAP. II.

Concerning the certainty of Death.

HAVING thus shewed you under what notions we are to consider death, and what wisdom we should learn from them; I proceed to the second thing, the certainty of death: *It is appointed unto men once to die;* ἀπόκειται, it remains, it is reserved, and, as it were, laid up for them.

I believe no man will desire a proof of this, which he sees with his eyes: one generation succeeds another, and those who live longest, at last yield to the fatal stroke. There were two men indeed, Enoch and Elias, who did not die, as death signifies a separation of soul and body, but were translated to heaven without dying: but this is the general law for mankind, from which none are excepted, but those whom God, by his soveriegn authority, and for wise reasons, thinks fit to except, which have been but two since the creation, and will be no more, till Christ comes to judge the world; for then, St Paul tells us, those

thoſe who are alive at Chriſt's ſecond coming, ſhall not die, but ſhall be changed, 1 *Cor.* xv. 51, 52. "Behold, I ſhew you a "myſtery; we ſhall not all ſleep, but we "ſhall all be changed, in a moment, in the "twinkling of an eye, at the laſt trump: "for the trumpet ſhall ſound, and the "dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible, and "we ſhall be changed." This is ſuch a change as is equivalent to death, it puts us in the ſame ſtate with thoſe who are dead, and at the laſt judgment riſe again.

SECT. I.

A vindication of the juſtice and goodneſs of God in appointing death for all men.

BUT before I ſhew you what uſe to make of this conſideration, that we muſt all certainly die; let us examine how mankind comes to be mortal. This was no diſpute among the heathens: for it was no great wonder that an earthly body ſhould die, and diſſolve again into duſt; it would be a much greater wonder to ſee a body of fleſh and blood preſerved in perpetual youth and vigour, without decays of nature, without being ſick, or growing old. But this is a queſtion among us: or if it may not be called a queſtion,

queſtion, yet it is what deſerves our conſideration, ſince we learn from the hiſtory of Moſes, that as frail and brittle as theſe earthly tabernacles are, yet if man had not ſinned, he had not died.

When God created man, and placed him in paradiſe, he forbad him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil: "Of "every tree of the garden thou mayſt "freely eat; but of the tree of the know-"ledge of good and evil thou ſhalt not "eat of it; for in the day thou eateſt "thereof thou ſhalt ſurely die," *Gen.* ii. 16, 17. And when, notwithſtanding this threatening, our firſt parents had eaten of it, God confirms and ratifies the ſentence, "Duſt thou art, and to duſt thou ſhalt "return," *Gen* iii. 19. What this tree of knowledge of good and evil was, is as great a myſtery to us as what the tree of life was, for we underſtand neither of them; which make ſome men, who would not be thought to be ignorant of any thing, to fly to allegorical ſenſes. But though I would be glad to know this, if I could; yet I muſt be contented to leave it a myſtery, as I find it. That which we are concerned in is, that this ſentence of death and mortality, which was pronounced on Adam, fell on all his poſterity: as St Paul tells us, 1 *Cor.* xv. 21, 22. "That by man

"came

" came death; and in Adam all die." And this he does not only aſſert, but prove, *Rom.* v. 12, 13, 14. " Wherefore " by man ſin entered into the world, and " death by ſin, and ſo death paſſed upon " all men, for that all have ſinned: for " until the law ſin was in the world, but " ſin is not imputed where there is no " law. Nevertheleſs death reigned from " Adam till Moſes, even over them who " had not ſinned after the ſimilitude of " Adam's tranſgreſſion." The deſign of all which is to prove that men die, or are mortal, not for their own ſins, but for the ſin of Adam; which the apoſtle proves by this argument, becauſe though all men, as well as Adam, have ſinned, yet till the giving the law of Moſes, there was no law which threatened death againſt ſin, but only that law given to Adam in paradiſe, which no man elſe ever did, or ever could tranſgreſs, but he. Now " ſin is not im- " puted where there is no law;" that is, it is not imputed to any man to death, before there is any law which threatens death againſt it; that no man can be reckoned to die for thoſe things which no law puniſhes with death. Upon what account then, ſays the apoſtle, could thoſe men die, who lived between Adam and Moſes, before the law was given, which

threatens

threatens death? and yet die they all did, even thoſe "who had not ſinned after the "ſimilitude of Adam's tranſgreſſion;" who had neither eaten the forbidden fruit, nor ſinned againſt any other expreſs law threatening death. This could be for no other ſin but Adam's: he ſinned, and brought death into the world, and thus death paſſed upon all men for his ſin: notwithſtanding they themſelves were ſinners; for though they were ſinners, yet that they died was not owing to their own ſins, becauſe they had not ſinned againſt any law which threatened death, but to the ſin of Adam: and therefore, in a proper ſenſe, "in Adam all die."

Now this is thought very hard, that the ſin of Adam ſhould bring death upon all his poſterity; that one man ſinned, and all men muſt die: and therefore I ſuppoſe no man will think it improper to my preſent argument, to give ſuch an account of this matter as will evidently juſtify the wiſdom and goodneſs, as well as the juſtice of God in it.

1. In the firſt place then I obſerve, that an immortal life in this world is not the original right of earthly creatures, but was wholly owing to the grace and favour of God. I call that an original right which is founded in the nature of things; for

otherwiſe, properly ſpeaking, no creatures have any right either to being or to ſubſiſtence, which, is a continuance in being: it is the goodneſs and the power of God which both made the world, and upholds and ſuſtains all things in being. And therefore Plato confeſſes, that the inferior gods, thoſe immortal ſpirits which he thought worthy of divine honours, were both made by the ſupreme God, and did ſubſiſt by his will; for he who made all things can annihilate them again when he pleaſes; and therefore their ſubſiſtence is as much owing to the divine goodneſs as their creation. But yet there is a great difference between the natural gift and bounty of God, and what is ſupernatural, or above the nature of things: what God makes by nature immortal, ſo that it has no principle of mortality in its conſtitution, immortality may be ſaid to be its natural right, becauſe it is by nature immortal, as ſpirits and the ſouls of men are. And in this caſe it would be thought very hard that a whole race of immortal beings ſhould be made mortal for the ſin of one; which would be to deprive them of their natural right to immortality, without their own fault. But when any creature is immortal, not by nature, but by ſupernatural grace, God may beſtow this ſupernatural

immortality upon what conditions he pleaſes, and take the forfeiture of it when he ſees fit. And this was the caſe of man in innocence: his body was not by nature immortal; for a body made of duſt will naturally reſolve into duſt again; and therefore, without a ſupernatural power, an earthly body muſt die: for which reaſon God provided a remedy againſt mortality, the tree of life, which he planted in paradiſe, and without which man could not be immortal: ſo that mortality was a neceſſary conſequence of his loſing paradiſe; for when he was baniſhed from the tree of life, he could have no remedy nor preſervative againſt death. Now I ſuppoſe no man will queſtion but God might very juſtly turn Adam out of paradiſe for his diſobedience, and then he muſt die, and all his poſterity die in him: for he being by nature mortal, muſt beget mortal children, and having forfeited the tree of life, he and his poſterity, who are all ſhut out of paradiſe with him, muſt neceſſarily die; which takes nothing from them to which any man had a right, (for no man had a natural right to paradiſe and the tree of life) but only leaves them to thoſe laws of mortality to which an earthly creature is naturally ſubject. God had promiſed paradiſe and the tree of life to no man but

to

to Adam himſelf, whom he created and placed in paradiſe; and therefore he took nothing away from any man, but from Adam, when he thruſt him out of paradiſe. Children indeed muſt follow the condition of their parents: had Adam preſerved his right to the tree of life, we had enjoyed it too; but he forfeiting it, we loſt it in him, and in him die; we loſt, I ſay, not any thing that we had a right to, but ſuch a ſupernatural privilege as we might have had, had he preſerved his innocence. And this is a ſufficient vindication of the juſtice of God in it. He has done us no injury: we are by nature mortal creatures, and he leaves us in that mortal ſtate: and to withdraw favours upon a reaſonable provocation is neither hard nor unjuſt.

2. For we muſt conſider farther, when ſin was once entered into the world, an immortal life here became impoſſible, without a conſtant ſeries of miracles. Adam had ſinned, and thereby corrupted his own nature, and therefore muſt neceſſarily propagate a corrupt nature to his poſterity: his earthly paſſions were broke looſe, he now knew good and evil, and therefore was in the hands of his own counſel to refuſe or chuſe the good or evil; and when the animal life was once awakened in

him, there was no great diſpute which way his affections would incline; to be ſure it is evident enough in his poſterity, whoſe boiſterous paſſions act ſuch tragedies in the world. Now, ſuppoſe in a ſtate of innocence that the tree of life would have preſerved men immortal, when no man would injure himſelf nor another, when there was no danger from wild beaſts, or intemperate air, or poiſonous herbs; yet, I ſuppoſe, no man will ſay, but that even in paradiſe itſelf, (could we ſuppoſe any ſuch thing) Adam might have been devoured by a wild beaſt, or killed with a ſtab at the heart; or had there been any poiſon there, it would have killed him, had he eaten or drunk it; or elſe he had another kind of body in paradiſe than we have now, for I am ſure theſe things would kill us. Conſider, then, how impoſſible it is that in this fallen apoſtate ſtate God ſhould preſerve man immortal, without working miracles every minute. Mens paſſions are now very unruly, and they fall out with one another, and will kill one another if they can; of which the world had a very early example in Cain, who ſlew his brother Abel; and all thoſe murders and bloody wars ſince that day put this matter out of doubt. Now this can never be prevented unleſs God ſhould

make

make our bodies invulnerable, which a body of fleſh and blood cannot be, without a miracle. Some die by their own hands, others by wild beaſts, others by evil accidents; and there are ſo many ways of deſtroying theſe brittle bodies, that it is the greateſt wonder that they laſt ſo long. And yet Adam's body in paradiſe was as very earth, and as brittle as ours are. But all this had been prevented, had man continued innocent; they would not then have quarrelled or fought, they would not have died by their own hands, nor drunk themſelves into a fever, nor over-loaded nature with riotous exceſſes; there had been no wild beaſt to devour, no infectious air, or poiſonous herbs; and then the tree of life would have repaired all the decays of nature, and preſerved a perpetual youth: but in this ſtate we are now, the tree of life could not preſerve us immortal, if a ſword or poiſon can kill; which ſhews us how impoſſible it was but that ſin and death muſt come into the world together. Man might have been immortal, had he never ſinned; but brutiſh and ungoverned paſſions will deſtroy us, without a miracle. And therefore we have no reaſon now to quarrel at the divine providence, that we are mortal; for, in the ordinary courſe of

providence, it is impoſſible it ſhould be otherwiſe.

3. Conſidering what the ſtate of this world neceſſarily is ſince the fall of man, an immortal life here is not deſireable.

No ſtate ought to be immortal, if it be deſigned as an act of favour and kindneſs, but what is compleatly happy; but this world is far enough from being ſuch a ſtate: ſome few years give wiſe men enough of it, though they are not oppreſſed with any great calamities; and there are a great many miſeries which nothing but death can give relief to. This puts an end to the ſorrows of the poor, of the oppreſſed, of the perſecuted; it is a haven of reſt, after all the tempeſts of a troubleſome world; it knocks off the priſoner's ſhackles, and ſets him at liberty; it dries up the tears of the widow and fatherleſs; it eaſes the complaints of a hungry belly and naked back; it tames the proudeſt tyrants, and reſtores peace to the world; it puts an end to all our labour, and it ſupports men under their preſent adverſities, eſpecially when they have a proſpect of a better life after this. The labour and miſery of men under the ſun is very great, but it would be intolerable were it endleſs: and therefore, ſince ſin is entered into the world, and ſo many neceſſary evils

and

and calamities attend it, it is an act of goodneſs, as well as juſtice in God, to ſhorten this miſerable life, and tranſport good men into a more happy, as well as immortal ſtate.

4. Since the fall of man, mortality and death is neceſſary to the good government of the world: nothing elſe can give check to ſome men's wickedneſs, but either the fear of death, or the execution of it: ſome men are ſo outragiouſly wicked, that nothing can put a ſtop to them, and prevent the miſchief they do in the world, but to cut them off. This is the reaſon of capital puniſhments among men, to remove thoſe out of the world, who will be a plague to mankind while they live in it. For this reaſon God deſtroyed the whole race of mankind, by a deluge of water, excepting Noah and his family, becauſe they were incurably wicked. For this reaſon he ſends plagues, and famines, and ſword, to correct the exorbitant growth of wickedneſs, to leſſen the number of ſinners, and to lay reſtraints on them. And if the world be ſuch a bedlam as it is under all theſe reſtraints, what would it be were it filled with immortal ſinners!

Ever ſince the fall of Adam, there always was, and ever will be a mixture of

good

good and bad men in the world; and juſtice requires that God ſhould reward the good and puniſh the wicked. But that cannot be done in this world; for theſe preſent external enjoyments are not the proper rewards of virtue. There is no complete happineſs here; man was never turned into this world till he ſinned, and was flung out of paradiſe; which is an argument that God never intended this world for a place of reward and perfect happineſs: nor is this world a proper place for the final puniſhment of bad men; becauſe good men live among them, and, without a miracle, bad men cannot be greatly puniſhed, but good men muſt ſhare with them; and were all bad men puniſhed to their deſerts, it would make this world the very image and picture of hell, which would be a very unfit place for good men to live and to be happy in. As much as good men ſuffer from the wicked in this world, it is much more tolerable than to have their ears filled with the perpetual cries of ſuch miſerable ſinners, and their eyes terrified with ſuch perpetual and amazing executions. Good and bad men muſt be ſeparated, before the one can be finally rewarded, or the other puniſhed; and ſuch a ſeparation as this

this cannot be made in this world, but muſt be reſerved for the next.

So that, conſidering the fallen ſtate of man, it was not fitting, it was not for the good of mankind, that they ſhould be immortal here. Both the wiſdom, and goodneſs, and juſtice of God, required that man ſhould die; which is an abundant juſtification of this divine decree, "that "it is appointed for men once to die."

5. As a further juſtification of the divine goodneſs in this, we may obſerve, that before God pronounced that ſentence on Adam, "Duſt thou art, and to duſt "thou ſhalt return," he expreſly promiſed, "that the ſeed of the woman ſhall "bruiſe the ſerpent's head," *Gen.* iii. 15. in his curſe upon the ſerpent who beguiled Eve; "I will put enmity between thee "and the woman, and between thy ſeed "and her ſeed; it ſhall bruiſe thy head, "and thou ſhalt bruiſe his heel." Which contains the promiſe of ſending Chriſt into the world, who "by death ſhould de-"ſtroy him who had the power of death, "that is, the devil; and deliver them, "who, through fear of death, were all "their life-time ſubject to bondage;" *Heb.* ii. 14, 15. *i. e.* before he denounces the ſentence of death againſt man, he promiſes a Saviour and deliverer, who ſhould triumph

triumph over death, and raiſe our dead bodies out of the duſt, immortal and glorious. Here is a moſt admirable mixture of mercy and judgment! man had forfeited an earthly immortality, and muſt die; but before God would denounce the ſentence of death againſt him, he promiſes to raiſe up his dead body again to a new and endleſs life. And have we any reaſon to complain then that God has dealt hardly with us, in involving us in the ſad conſequences of Adam's ſin, and expoſing us to a temporal death, when he has promiſed to raiſe us up from the dead again, and to beſtow a more glorious immortality on us, which we ſhall never loſe? When man had ſinned it was neceſſary that he ſhould die, becauſe he could never be completely and perfectly happy in this world, as you have already heard; and the only poſſible way to make him happy was to tranſlate him into another world, and to beſtow a better immortality on him. This God has done, and that in a very ſtupenduous way, by giving his own Son to die for us.

And now we have little reaſon to complain that we all died in Adam, ſince we are made alive in Chriſt. To have died in Adam, never to have lived more, had indeed been very ſevere upon mankind: but when death ſignifies only a neceſſity of going

going out of theſe bodies, and living without them for ſome time, in order to re-aſſume them again immortal and glorious, we have no reaſon to think this any great hurt. Nay, indeed, if we conſider things aright, the divine goodneſs has improved the fall of Adam to the raiſing of mankind to a more happy and perfect ſtate. For though a paradiſe, where God placed Adam in innocence, was a happier ſtate of life than this world, freed from all the diſorders of a mortal body, and from all the neceſſary cares and troubles of this life, yet you will all grant that heaven is a happier place than an earthly paradiſe; and therefore it is more for our happineſs to be tranſlated from earth to heaven, than to have lived always in an earthly paradiſe. You will all grant that the ſtate of good men, when they are out of theſe bodies, before the reſurrection, is a happier life than paradiſe was; for it is "to be with "Chriſt," as St Paul tells us, "which is "far better," *Phil.* i. 23. And when our bodies riſe again from the dead, you will grant they will be more glorious bodies than Adam's was in innocence; for "the "firſt man was of the earth earthly, but "the ſecond man is the Lord from hea-"ven," 1 *Cor.* xv. 47. Adam had an earthly mortal body, though it ſhould have

have been immortal by grace: but at the reſurrection "our bodies ſhall be faſhioned "like to Chriſt's moſt glorious body. The "righteous ſhall ſhine forth like the ſun "in the kingdom of their Father; that as "we have borne the image of the earthly, "we ſhall alſo bear the image of the hea-"venly," 1 *Cor.* xv. 49. ſo that our redemption by Chriſt has infinitely the advantage of Adam's fall, and we have no reaſon to complain that "by man came "death, ſince by man alſo came the re-"ſurrection of the dead." So that St Paul might well magnify the grace of God in our redemption by Chriſt, above his juſtice and ſeverity in puniſhing Adam's ſin with death, *Rom.* v. 15, 16, 17. "But not as "the offence, ſo alſo is the free gift: for "if through the offence of one, many be "dead; much more the grace of God, "and the gift by grace, which is by one "man, Jeſus Chriſt, hath abounded unto "many. And not as it was by one that "ſinned, ſo is the gift: for the judgment "was by one to condemnation, but the "free gift is of many offences unto juſti-"fication. For if by one man's offence "death reigned by one, much more they "which receive abundance of grace, and "of the gift of righteouſneſs, ſhall reign "in life by one, Jeſus Chriſt." Where

the apoſtle magnifies the grace of God upon a fourfold account: 1. That death was the juſt reward of ſin, it came by the offence of one, and was an act of juſtice in God: whereas our redemption by Chriſt is the gift of grace, the free gift, which we had no juſt claim to. 2. That by Chriſt we are not only delivered from the effects of Adam's ſin, but from the guilt of our own: "for though the judgment was by "one to condemnation, the free gift is of "many offences unto juſtification." 3. That though we die in Adam, we are not barely made alive again in Chriſt, but "ſhall "reign in life by one, Jeſus Chriſt;" which is a much happier life than what we loſt in Adam. 4. That as we die by one man's offence, ſo we live by one too: "by the righteouſneſs of one, the free "gift comes upon all men unto juſtifica-"tion of life." We have no reaſon to complain that the ſin of Adam is imputed to us to death, if the righteouſneſs of Chriſt purchaſe for us eternal life. The firſt was a neceſſary conſequence of Adam's loſing paradiſe; the ſecond is wholly owing to the grace of God.

Thus we ſee what it is that makes us mortal. God did not make death; he created us in a happy and immortal ſtate; but "by man ſin entered into the world, and

"death by ſin." Whatever averſion then we have to death, ſhould beget in us a greater horror of ſin, which did not only at firſt make us mortal, but is to this day both the cauſe of death, and the ſting of it. No degree indeed of virtue now can preſerve us from dying; but yet virtue may prolong our lives, and make them happy; while ſin very often haſtens us to the grave, and cuts us off in the very midſt of our days. An intemperate and luſtful man deſtroys the moſt vigorous conſtitution of body, dies of a fever, or a dropſy, and rottenneſs or conſumptions; others fall a ſacrifice to private revenge, or public juſtice, or divine vengeance; "for the wicked "ſhall not live out half their days." However, ſetting aſide ſome little natural averſions, which are more eaſily conquered, and death were a very innocent, harmleſs, nay deſirable thing, did not ſin give a ſting to it, and terrify us with the thoughts of that judgment which is to follow. Quarrel not then at the divine juſtice in appointing death; God is very good, as well as juſt in it; but vent all your indignation againſt ſin, pull out this ſting of death, and then you will ſee nothing but ſmiles and charms in it; then it is nothing but putting off theſe mortal bodies, to re-aſſume them again, with all the advantage of an immortal youth.

youth. It is certain indeed we muſt die; this is appointed for us all: and the very certainty of our death will teach us that wiſdom which may help us to regain a better immortality than we have loſt.

SECT. II.

How to improve this conſideration, that we muſt certainly die.

FOR, (1.) If it be certain that we muſt die, this ſhould teach us frequently to think of death, to keep it always in our eyes and view. For why ſhould we caſt off the thoughts of that which will certainly come, eſpecially when it is ſo neceſſary to the good government of our lives, to remember that we muſt die? If we muſt die, I think it concerns us to take care that we may die happily, and that depends upon our living well; and nothing has ſuch a powerful influence upon the good government of our lives, as the thoughts of death. I have already ſhewed you what wiſdom death will teach us; but no man will learn this who doth not conſider what it is to die, and no man will practiſe it who does not often remember that he muſt die: but he that lives under a conſtant ſenſe of death, has a perpetual antidote againſt the follies

and vanities of this world, and a perpetual ſpur to virtue.

When ſuch a man finds his deſires after this world enlarge beyond not only the wants, but the conveniences of nature, Thou fool, ſays he to himſelf, what is the meaning of all this? what kindles this inſatiable thirſt of riches? why muſt there be no end of adding houſe to houſe, and field to field? is this world thy home? is this thy abiding city? doſt thou hope to take up thy eternal reſt here? Vain man! thou muſt ſhortly remove thy dwelling, and then whoſe ſhall all theſe things be? death will ſhortly cloſe thy eyes, and then thou ſhalt not ſo much as ſee the god thou worſhippeſt: the earth ſhall ſhortly cover thee, and then thou ſhalt have thy mouth and belly full of clay and duſt. Such thoughts as theſe will cool our deſires to this preſent world, will make us contented when we have enough, and very charitable and liberal of what we can ſpare: for what ſhould we do with more in this world than will carry us through it? what better and wiſer uſe can we make of ſuch riches as we can't carry with us into the other world, than to return them thither before-hand into acts of piety and charity, that we may receive the rewards and recompence of them in a better life; that we may "make to

" ourſelves friends of the mammon of un-
" righteouſneſs, that when we fail they
" may receive us into everlaſting habita-
" tions?"

When he finds his mind begin to ſwell and increaſe as his fortune and honours do, Lord, thinks he, what a bubble is this, which every breath of air can blow away! how vain a thing is man in his greateſt glory, who appears gay and beautiful, like a flower in the ſpring, and is as ſoon cut down and withered! Though we ſhould meet with no change in our fortune here, yet we ſhall ſuddenly be removed out of this world; the ſcene of this life will change, and there is an end of earthly greatneſs. And what a contemptible mind is that, which is ſwelled with dying honours! which looks big indeed, as a body does which is ſwelled out of all proportion with a dropſy or tympany, but that is its diſeaſe, not a natural beauty. What am I better than the pooreſt man who begs an alms, unleſs I be wiſer and more virtuous than he? can lands and houſes, great palaces and titles, things which are not ours, and which we cannot keep, make ſuch a mighty difference between one man and another? are theſe the riches, are theſe the beauties and glories of a ſpirit? Are we not all made of the ſame mould? is not God the father of us all? muſt

we not all die alike, and ly down in the duſt together? and can the different parts we act in this world, which are not ſo long as a ſcene of a play, compared to an eternal duration, make ſuch a vaſt difference between men? This will make men humble and modeſt in the higheſt fortune, as minding them that when they are got to the top round of honour, if they keep from falling, yet they muſt be carried down again, and laid as low as the duſt.

Thus when he finds the body growing upon the mind, and intoxicating it with the love of ſenſual pleaſures; he remembers that his body muſt die, and all theſe pleaſures muſt die with it; that they are indeed killing pleaſures, which kill a mortal body before its time; that it does not become a man, who is but a traveller in this world, but a pilgrim and ſtranger here, to ſtudy eaſe, and ſoftneſs, and luxury; that a ſoul which muſt live for ever, ſhould ſeek after more laſting pleaſures, which may ſurvive the funeral of the body, and be a ſpring of raviſhing joys, when he is ſtript of fleſh and blood. Theſe are the thoughts which the conſideration of death will ſuggeſt to us, as I have already ſhewn you; and it is impoſſible for a man who has always theſe thoughts at hand to be much impoſed on by the pageantry of this world,

world, by the tranſient honours and pleaſures of it.

It is indeed, I think, a very impracticable rule, which ſome men give, to live always as if they were to die the next moment. Our lives ſhould always be as innocent as if we were immediately to give up our accounts to God; but it is impoſſible to have always thoſe ſenſible apprehenſions of death about us, which we have when we ſee it approaching. But though we cannot live as if we were immediately to die, (which would put an end, not only to all innocent mirth, but to all the neceſſary buſineſs of the world, which, I believe, no dying man would concern himſelf for) yet we may and we ought to live as thoſe who muſt certainly die, and ought to have theſe thoughts continually about us, as a guard upon our actions. For whatever is of ſuch mighty conſequence to us as death is, if it be certain, ought always to give laws to our behaviour and converſation.

(2.) If it is certain we muſt die, the very firſt thing we ought to do in this world, after we come to years of underſtanding, ſhould be to prepare for death, that whenever death comes we may be ready for it.

This, I confeſs, is not according to the way

way of this world; for dying is uſually the laſt thing they take care of. This is thought a little unſeaſonable, while men are young, and healthful, and vigorous. But beſides the uncertainty of our lives, and that it is poſſible, while we delay, death may ſeize on us before we are provided for it, and then we muſt be miſerable for ever (which I ſhall ſpeak to under the next head); I doubt not but to convince every conſidering man, that an early preparation for death is the very beſt means to make our lives happy in this world, while we do continue here. Nor ſhall I urge here, how a life of holineſs and virtue, which is the beſt and only preparation for death, tends to make us happy in this world, delivers us from all thoſe miſchiefs, which the wildneſs and giddineſs of youth, and the more confirmed debaucheries of riper years, expoſe men to: for this is properly the commendation of virtue, not of an early preparation for death. And yet this is really a great engagement and motive to prepare by times for death, ſince ſuch a preparation for death will put us to no greater hardſhips and inconveniences than the practice of ſuch virtues as will prolong our lives, preſerve or increaſe our fortunes, give us honour and reputation in the world, and make us beloved both by God and

and men. But ſetting aſide theſe things, there are two advantages of an early preparation for death, which contribute more to our happineſs than all the world beſides: 1. That it betimes delivers us from the fears of death, and conſequently from moſt other fears. 2. That it ſupports us under all the troubles and calamities of this life.

I. It betimes delivers us from the fears of death: and indeed it is then only that a man begins to live, when he is got above the fears of death. Were men thoughtful and conſiderate, death would hang over them in all their mirth and jollity, like a fatal ſword by a ſingle hair; it would ſour all their enjoyments, and ſtrike terror into their hearts and looks. But the ſecurity of moſt men is, that they put off the thoughts of death, as they do their preparation for it; they live ſecure and free from danger, only becauſe they will not open their eyes to ſee it. But theſe are ſuch examples as no wiſe man will propoſe to himſelf, becauſe they are not ſafe. And there are ſo many occaſions to put theſe men in mind of death, that it is a very hard thing not to think of it; and whenever they do, it chills their blood and ſpirits, and draws a black melancholy veil over all the glories in the world. How are ſuch men ſurpriſed when any danger approaches,

approaches, when death comes within view, and ſhews his ſcythe, and only ſome few ſands at the bottom of the glaſs! This is a very frightful ſight to men who are not prepared to die; and yet, ſhould they give themſelves liberty to think in what danger they live every minute, how many thouſand accidents may cut them off, which they neither can foreſee nor prevent; fear, and horror, and conſternation would be their entertainment, till they could think of death without fear, till they were reconciled to the thoughts of dying, by great and certain hopes of a better life after death.

So that no man can live happily if he lives like a man, with his thoughts, and reaſon, and conſideration about him, but he who takes care betimes to prepare for death and another world. Till this be done, a wiſe man will ſee himſelf always in danger, and then he muſt always fear. But he is a happy man who knows and conſiders himſelf to be mortal, and is not afraid to die. His pleaſures and enjoyments are ſincere and unmixed, never diſturbed with a hand-writing upon the wall, nor with ſome ſecret qualms and miſgivings of mind; he is not terrified with preſent dangers, at leaſt not amazed and diſtracted with them. A man who is de-

livered

livered from the fears of death, fears nothing elſe in exceſs but God. And fear is ſo troubleſome a paſſion, that nothing is more for the happineſs of our lives, than to be delivered from it.

2. As a conſequence of this, an early preparation for death will ſupport men under all the troubles and calamities of this life. There are ſo many troubles to which mankind are expoſed in this world, that no man muſt expect to eſcape them all; nay, there are a great many troubles which are unſupportable to human nature, which there can be no relief for in this world. The hopes and expectations of a better life are, in moſt caſes, the ſafeſt retreat. A man may bear his preſent ſufferings with ſome courage, when he knows that he ſhall quickly ſee an end of them, that death will put an end to them, and place him out of their reach; for "there "the wicked ceaſe from troubling, and "there the weary be at reſt; there the "priſoners reſt together, they hear not "the voice of the oppreſſor: the ſmall "and great are there, and the ſervant is "free from his maſter," *Job.* iii. 17, 18, 19.

So that, in many caſes, the thoughts and expectations of death is the only thing that can ſupport us under preſent ſufferings: but while the thoughts of death itſelf

ſelf are terrible to us, this will be a poor comfort. Men who are under the ſenſe of guilt are more afraid of death than they are of all the evils of this world. Whatever their preſent ſufferings are, they are not ſo terrible "as lakes of fire and brim-"ſtone, the worm that never dieth, and "the fire that never goeth out." So that ſuch men, while they are under the fears and terrors of death, have nothing to ſupport them under preſent miſeries. The next world, which death puts us into the poſſeſſion of, is a very delightful proſpect to good men; there they ſee the rewards of their labour and ſufferings, of their faith and patience. They can ſuffer ſhame and reproach, and "take joyfully the "ſpoiling of their goods, ſince theſe light "afflictions, which are but for a ſeaſon, "will work for them a far more exceed-"ing and eternal weight of glory." But men who are not prepared to die, while they are afraid of death, can find no relief in the thoughts of it, and therefore want the greateſt ſupport we can have in this life againſt the ſufferings of it. The ſooner we prepare to die, the ſooner we are delivered from the fears of death; and then the hope of a better life will carry us chearfully through this world, whatever ſtorms we meet with.

3. Since we muſt certainly die, it makes it extremely reaſonable to ſacrifice our lives to God, whenever he calls for them; that is, rather to chuſe to die a little before our time, than to renounce God, or to give his worſhip to idols, or any created beings, or to corrupt the faith and religion of Chriſt. There are arguments indeed enough to encourage Chriſtians to martyrdom, when God calls them to ſuffer for his ſake: the love of Chriſt in dying for us is a ſufficient reaſon why we ſhould chearfully die for him; and the great rewards of martyrdom, that glorious crown which is reſerved for ſuch conquerors, made the primitive Chriſtians ambitious of it. It is certain there is no hurt in it; nay, that it is a peculiar favour to die for Chriſt; becauſe thoſe perſons who are moſt dear to him were crowned with martyrdom. But our preſent argument ſhews us, at what an eaſy rate we may purchaſe ſo glorious a crown, for we part with nothing for it; we die for God, and we muſt die whether we die martyrs or not: and what man then, who knows he muſt die, and believes the rewards of martyrdom, can think it ſo terrible to die a martyr? No good Chriſtian can think that he loſes any thing by the bargain, to exchange this life for a better; for as many years

as he gets ſooner out of this world than he ſhould have done by the courſe of nature, ſo many years he gets ſooner to heaven; and I ſuppoſe that is no great loſs. It is indeed a noble expreſſion of our love to God, our entire obedience and ſubjection to him, and of a perfect truſt in him, to part with our lives for his ſake: but what can a man, who knows he muſt die, do leſs for God than this, to part with a life which he cannot keep, willingly to lay down a life for God which would ſhortly be taken from him, whether he will or not?

4. This ſhews us alſo what little reaſon we have to be afraid of the power of men. The utmoſt they can do is to kill the body, a mortal body, which will die whether they kill it or not; which is no mighty argument of power, no more than it is to break a brittle glaſs; nor any great hurt to us, no more than it is to die, which we are all born to, and which is no injury to a good man. And therefore our Saviour's counſel is very reaſonable, *Luke* xii. 4, 5. "Be not afraid of them that kill the bo-"dy, and after that have no more that "they can do: but I will forewarn you "whom you ſhall fear; fear him which "after he hath killed, hath power to caſt "into

"into hell; yea, I ſay unto you, fear "him."

This is very reaſonable, when the fear of God and men is oppoſed to each other, which is the only caſe our Saviour ſuppoſes. No man ought fooliſhly to fling away his life, nor to provoke and affront princes, who have the power of life and death; this is not to die like a martyr, but like a fool or a rebel. But when a prince threatens death, and God threatens damnation, then our Saviour's counſel takes place, not to fear men, but God; for indeed God's power in this is equal to mens at leaſt. Men can kill, for men are mortal, and may be killed; and this is only for a mortal creature to die a little out of order: but God can kill too; and thus far the caſe is the ſame. It is true, moſt men are of the mind, in ſuch a caſe, rather to truſt God than men; becauſe he does not always puniſh in this world, nor execute a ſpeedy vengeance. And yet when our Saviour takes notice, that God kills as well as men, it ſeems to intimate to us, that ſuch apoſtates, who rather chuſe to provoke God than men, may meet with their deſerts in this world; for no man is ſecure that God will not puniſh him in this world; and apoſtates, of all others, have leaſt reaſon to expect it. Thoſe who

renounce God for fear of men are the fitteſt perſons to be made examples of a ſudden vengeance. But then when men have killed, they can do no more, they cannot kill the ſoul. And here the power of God and man is very unequal; for when he has killed, he can caſt both body and ſoul into hell-fire. This is a very formidable power indeed, and we have reaſon to fear him: but the power of men, who can only kill a mortal body, is not very terrible; it ought not to frighten us into any ſin, which will make us obnoxious to that more terrible power which can deſtroy the ſoul.

CHAP. III.

Concerning the time of our death, and the proper improvement of it.

LET us now conſider the time of our death; which is once, but when, uncertain.

Now, when I ſay the time of our death is uncertain, I need not tell you that I mean only it is uncertain to us; that is, that no man knows when he ſhall die: for God certainly knows all things; and therefore, with reſpect to the foreknowledge of God, the time of our death is certain.

Thus

Thus much is certain as to death, that we muſt all die; and it is certain alſo that death is not far off, becauſe we know our lives are very ſhort. Before the flood men lived many hundred years; but it is a great while now ſince the pſalmiſt obſerved, that the ordinary term of human life had very narrow bounds ſet to it: "the days "of our years are threeſcore years and "ten; and if by reaſon of ſtrength they "be fourſcore years, yet is their ſtrength "labour and ſorrow; for it is ſoon cut "off, and we fly away," *Pſal.* xc. 10. There are ſome exceptions from this general rule; but this is the ordinary period of human life, when it is ſpun out to the greateſt length: and therefore within this term we may reaſonably expect it; for in the ordinary courſe of nature our bodies are not made to laſt much longer.

Thus far we are certain: but then how much of this time we ſhall run out, how ſoon or how late we ſhall die, we know not; for we ſee no age exempted from death: ſome expire in the cradle, and at their mother's breaſts; others in the heat and vigour of youth; others ſurvive to a decrepid old age, and, it may be, follow their whole family to their graves. Death very often ſurpriſeth us, when we leaſt think of it, without giving us any warn-

ing of its approach; and that is proof enough that the time of our death is unknown and uncertain to us.

But theſe things deſerve to be particularly diſcourſed: and therefore, with reference to the time of our death, I ſhall obſerve theſe four things, not ſo much to explain them, for moſt of them are plain enough of themſelves, as to improve them for the government of our lives.

I. That the general period of human life, which is the ſame thing with the time of our death, is fixed and determined by God.

II. That the particular time of every man's death, though it be foreknown by God, who foreknows all things, yet it does not appear that it is peremptorily decreed and determined by God.

III. That the particular time when any of us ſhall die, is unknown and uncertain to us.

IV. That we muſt die but once; "It is "appointed for all men once to die."

SECT.

SECT. I.

That the general period of life is fixed and determined by God, and that it is but very ſhort.

I. THAT the general period of human life, which is the ſame thing with the time of our death, is fixed and determined by God: that is, there is a time ſet to human life, beyond which no man ſhall live, as Job ſpeaks, *Job.* xiv. 5. "His days "are determined, the number of his months "are with thee; thou haſt appointed his "bounds that he cannot paſs." Which does not refer to the period of every particular man's life, but is ſpoken of man in general, that there are fixed bounds ſet to human life which no man can exceed.

What theſe bounds are God has not expreſsly declared; but that muſt be learned from obſervation. Such a time as moſt commonly puts a period to mens lives who live longeſt, may generally paſs for the common meaſure of human life, tho' there may be ſome few exceptions.

Before the flood no man lived a thouſand years; and therefore we may conclude, that the longeſt term of human life, after the ſentence of death was paſſed on man,

was

was confined within a thouſand years. Methuſelah, who was the longeſt liver, lived but nine hundred ſixty nine years, and he died; ſo that no man ever lived a thouſand years. And comparing this obſervation with that promiſe of a thouſand years reign with Chriſt, which is called the firſt reſurrection, and is the portion only of martyrs and confeſſors, and pure and ſincere Chriſtians, *Rev.* xx. I have been apt to conclude, that to live a thouſand years is the privilege only of immortal creatures; that if Adam had continued innocent, he ſhould have lived no longer on earth, but have been traſlated to Heaven without dying; for this thouſand years reign of the ſaints with Chriſt, whatever that ſignifies, ſeems to be intended as a reparation of that death which they fell under by Adam's ſin. But then thoſe thouſand years do not put an end to the happineſs of theſe glorious ſaints, but they are immortal creatures; and tho' this reign with Chriſt continues but a thouſand years, their happineſs ſhall have no end, though the ſcene may change and vary; "for over ſuch men the ſecond "death hath no power." Or elſe this thouſand years reign with Chriſt muſt ſignify an eternal and unchangeable kingdom, a thouſand years being a certain earneſt of immortality. But there is an unanſwer-

able

able objection againſt that, becauſe we read of the expiring of theſe thouſand years, and what ſhall come after them, even the final judgment of all the world. But this is a great myſtery, which we muſt not hope to underſtand till we ſee the bleſſed accompliſhment of it.

But though before the flood ſome perſons lived near a thouſand years, yet after the flood the term of life was much ſhortened. Some think this was done by God when he pronounced that ſentence, *Gen.* iv. 3. "And the Lord ſaid, My ſpirit ſhall not "always ſtrive with man, for that he alſo "is fleſh, yet his days ſhall be an hundred "and twenty years:" as if God had then decreed, that the life of man ſhould not exceed an hundred and twenty years. But this does not agree with that account we have of mens lives after the flood; for not only Noah and his ſons, who were in the ark, lived much longer than this after the flood; but Arphaxad lived five hundred and thirty years, Sala four hundred and three years, Eber four hundred and thirty years, and Abraham himſelf a hundred and ſeventy five years: and therefore this hundred and twenty years can't refer to the ordinary term of man's life, but to the continuance of God's patience with that wicked world, before he would bring the flood upon them,

to

to deſtroy the corrupt generation of men; that is, that he ſhould bear with them a hundred and twenty years before he would ſend the flood to deſtroy them. But afterwards by degrees life was ſhortened, inſomuch that though Moſes himſelf lived a great deal longer, yet if the 90th pſalm was compoſed by him, as the title tells us it was, the ordinary term of life in his days was but threeſcore years and ten, or fourſcore years, ver. 10. "The days of "our years are threeſcore years and ten; "and if by reaſon of ſtrength they be four-"ſcore years, yet is their ſtrength labour "and ſorrow; for it is ſoon cut off, and "we fly away." And this has continued the ordinary meaſure of life ever ſince; which is ſo very ſhort, that David might well ſay, "Behold, thou haſt made my "days as an hand-breadth, and mine age is "as nothing before thee. Verily, every "man, in his beſt eſtate, is altogether va-"nity," *Pſal.* xxxix. 5.

I ſhall not ſcrupulouſly enquire into the reaſon of this great change, why our lives are reduced into ſo ſmall a compaſs. Some will not believe that it was ſo, but think that there is a miſtake in the manner of the account; that when they are ſaid to live eight or nine hundred years, they computed their years by the moon, not by the ſun;

ſun; that is, their years were months, twelve of which make but one of our years; and then indeed the longeſt livers of them did not live ſo long as many men do at this day; for Methuſelah himſelf, who lived nine hundred ſixty nine years, according to this computation of months for years, lived but fourſcore years and five months. But it is very abſurd to imagine that Moſes would uſe two ſuch different accounts of time, that ſometimes by a year he ſhould mean no more than a month, and ſometimes twelve months, without giving the leaſt notice of it, which is unpardonable in any hiſtorian. And therefore others complain much that they were not born in thoſe days, when the life of man was prolonged for ſo many hundred years; there had been ſome comfort in living then, when they enjoyed all the vigour and gaiety of youth, and could reliſh the pleaſures of life for ſeven, eight or nine hundred years; a bleſſing which men would purchaſe at any rate in our days: but now we can ſcarce turn ourſelves about in the world, but we are admoniſhed by gray hairs, or the ſenſible decays of nature, to prepare for our winding-ſheet. And therefore, for the farther improvement of this argument, I ſhall, (1.) Shew you what little reaſon we have

have to complain of the ſhortneſs of life. (2.) What uſe we are to make of it.

SECT. II.

What little reaſon we have to complain of the ſhortneſs of human life.

(1.) WHAT little reaſon we have to complain of the ſhortneſs of life, and the too haſty approaches of death to us. For, 1. Such a long life is not reconcileable with the preſent ſtate of the world. And, 2. Our lives are long enough for all the wiſe purpoſes of living.

1. Such a long life is not reconcileable with the preſent ſtateof the world. What the taſte of the world was before the flood, in what manner they lived, and how they employed their time, we cannot tell, for Moſes has given no account of it: but taking the world as it is, and as we find it, I dare undertake to convince thoſe men who are moſt apt to complain of the ſhortneſs of life, that it would not be for the general happineſs of mankind to have it much longer: for, 1ſt, The world is at preſent very unequally divided; ſome have nothing but what they earn by very hard labour, or extort from other men's charity by their reſtleſs importunities, or

gain by more ungodly arts. Now, tho' the rich and proſperous, who have the world at command, and live in eaſe and pleaſure, would be very well contented to ſpend ſome hundred years in this world; yet I ſhould think fifty or threeſcore years abundantly enough for ſlaves and beggars, enough to ſpend in hunger and want, in a goal and a priſon. And thoſe who are ſo fooliſh as not to think this enough, owe a great deal to the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, that he does. So that the greateſt part of mankind have great reaſon to be contented with the ſhortneſs of life, becauſe they have no temptation to wiſh it longer.

2*dly*, The preſent ſtate of this world requires a more quick ſucceſſion: the world is pretty well peopled, and is divided among its preſent inhabitants; and but very few, in compariſon, as I obſerved before, have any conſiderable ſhare in the diviſion. Now, let us but ſuppoſe that all our anceſtors, who lived an hundred or two hundred years ago, were alive ſtill, and poſſeſſed their old eſtates and honours, what had become of this preſent generation of men, who have now taken their places, and make as great a ſhow and buſtle in the world as they did? And if you look back three,

or four, or five hundred years, the caſe is ſtill ſo much the worſe; the world would be over-peopled, and where there is one poor miſerable man now, there muſt have been five hundred, or the world muſt have been common, and all men reduced to the ſame level; which, I believe, the rich and happy people, who are ſo fond of long life, would not like very well. This would utterly undo our young prodigal heirs, were their hopes of ſucceſſion three or four hundred years off, who, as ſhort as life is now, think their fathers make very little haſte to their graves: this would ſpoil their trade of ſpending their eſtates before they have them, and make them live a dull ſober life, whether they would or no; and ſuch a life, I know, they don't think worth having: and therefore, I hope, at leaſt, they will not make the ſhortneſs of their fathers lives an argument againſt providence. And yet ſuch kind of ſparks as theſe are commonly the wits that ſet up for Atheiſm, and, when it is put into their heads, quarrel with every thing which they fondly conceive will waken the belief of a God, and a providence; and, among other things, with the ſhortneſs of life, which they have little reaſon to do, when they ſo often out-live their eſtates.

3*dly*,

3*dly*, The world is very bad as it is; ſo bad that good men ſcarce know how to ſpend fifty or threeſcore years in it: but conſider how bad it would probably be, were the life of man extended to ſix, ſeven or eight hundred years. If ſo near a proſpect of the other world, as forty or fifty years, cannot reſtrain men from the greateſt villainies; what would they do if they could as reaſonably ſuppoſe death to be three or four hundred years off? If men make ſuch improvements in wickedneſs in twenty or thirty years, what would they do in hundreds? and what a bleſſed place then would this world be to live in! We ſee in the old, when the life of man was drawn out to a great length, the wickedneſs of mankind grew ſo inſufferable, that it repented God he had made man; and he reſolved to deſtroy that whole generation, excepting Noah and his family. And the moſt probable account that can be given how they came to grow ſo univerſally wicked, is the long and proſperous lives of ſuch wicked men, who by degrees corrupted others, and they others, till there was but one righteous family left, and no other remedy left but to deſtroy them all; leaving only that righteous family, as ſeed and the future hopes of the new world.

And when God had determined in himſelf, and promiſed to Noah, never to deſtroy the world again by ſuch an univerſal deſtruction, till the laſt and final judgement; it was neceſſary by degrees to ſhorten the lives of men, which was the moſt effectual means to make them more governable, and to remove bad examples out of the world; which would hinder the ſpreading of the infection, and people and reform the world again by new examples of piety and virtue. For when there are ſuch quick ſucceſſions of men, there are few ages but have ſome great and brave examples, which give a new and better ſpirit to the world.

Many other things might be added, to convince thoſe who complain of the ſhortneſs of human life, that it would be no deſireable thing, as the ſtate of the world now is, to live ſeven or eight hundred years in it. But this, I ſuppoſe, is enough, if I can make good the ſecond thing I propoſed, That our lives are long enough for all the wiſe purpoſes of living.

Now, I will not promiſe myſelf to ſatisfy all men in this matter; for thoſe that think it the only end of living to eat and drink, and enjoy the more impure delights of fleſh and ſenſe, will never be ſatisfied, that threeſcore and ten years are as good

as

as eight or nine hundred for this purpoſe; for the longer they enjoy theſe pleaſures, and the oftner they repeat them, the better it is. But theſe men ought to be convinced, that this is not the true end of living; that theſe are only means to preſerve life, which God hath ſweetened with ſuch proper ſatisfactions, or made the neglect of them ſo uneaſy and painful, that no man might forget to take care to preſerve himſelf. But man was made at firſt for higher and nobler ends; and ſince by the ſin of Adam we are all become mortal, this life is not for itſelf, but in order to a better life.

We come into this world, not to ſtay here, or take up our abode and reſt; for then indeed the longer we lived, the better; but this world is only a ſtate of trial and diſcipline to exerciſe our virtues, to perfect our minds, to prepare and qualify ourſelves for the more pure, and refined, and ſpiritual enjoyments of the other world. We come into this world, not ſo much to enjoy, as to conquer it, and to triumph over it, to baffle its temptations, to deſpiſe its flatteries, and to endure its terrors; and if we live long enough to do this, we live long enough, and ought to thank God that our work, and labour, and temptations are at an end. For what la-

bouring man is not glad that his work is over, and he may go to reſt? what mariner is not glad that he has weathered all ſtorms, and ſteered a ſafe courſe to his deſired haven?

There are two things neceſſary to the improvement of our minds, knowledge and virtue: and as God hath ſhortened our lives, ſo he has ſhortened our work too, and given us a more eaſy and compendious way to both.

Knowledge indeed is an infinite and endleſs thing; and it is impoſſible thoroughly to ſatisfy that appetite in great and generous minds, in this blind and obſcure ſtate of life; but the comfort is, all the knowledge that is neceſſary to carry us to heaven is now plain and eaſy, and will not take up many years to learn it; for "this is life eternal, to know God, "and Chriſt Jeſus whom he hath ſent;" which is plainly revealed to us in the goſpel. And when we get to heaven, we ſhall quickly underſtand all the difficulties of nature and providence, in another manner than the greateſt philoſophers do now, or can do, though they ſhould live many hundred years.

And as for virtue, we have as ſhort and eaſy a way to it: the plaineſt and moſt perfect precepts, the moſt admirable examples,

amples, the moſt encouraging and inviting promiſes, and, which is more than all, the moſt powerful aſſiſtances of the Divine Spirit to renew and ſanctify us: and he who is not reformed by thoſe divine and ſupernatural methods of grace in forty or fifty years, is not likely to be the better for them, tho' he ſhould live to Methuſelah's age.

As for doing good, I confeſs, the longer a good man lives, the more good he will do, and make himſelf the more uſeful to the world. But this is God's care; and whenever he calls him out of the world, he excuſes him from doing any more good in it.

The truth is, nothing could be more improper under the ſtate of the goſpel than ſuch a long life as worldly men are very fond of. For our Saviour has taught us to expect perſecution and ſufferings for his name; and this is very often the portion of true and ſincere Chriſtians, ſo that St Paul could ſay, "If in this life only we "had hope, we were of all men the moſt "miſerable." Thanks be to God it is not always ſo; but when it is, it would be too great a temptation for human nature to live ſome hundred years in perſecution, as they might, if they and the perſecuting prince ſhould live ſo long.

Nay,

Nay, ſuch a long life as men talk of, would greatly weaken the promiſes and threatenings of the goſpel, which are all abſent and unſeen things, to be expected in the other world. But if the next world were ſo many hundred years off, both the promiſes and threatenings of it would loſe their effect upon the generality of mankind.

Nay, it may be thought very hard upon good men, who are taught by the goſpel of Chriſt to live above this world, to have a very mean opinion of it, and a great indifferency to all the delights of it, to live ſo many hundred years in it, not ſo much to enjoy it, as to deſpiſe it, and to contend with it. And it is no leſs hard for men who are tranſported with the raviſhing hopes and expectations of a better life, whoſe hearts and converſations are already in heaven, to be kept ſo long out of it. This is a ſevere trial of their patience; for hope, when it is ſo long delayed, is a very troubleſome and uneaſy paſſion: and though few men long to die, yet a great many good men do very impatiently long to be in heaven, and can be contented, whenever God pleaſes, to ſubmit to dying, though with ſome natural reluctancy, that they may get to heaven.

In ſhort, this life is long enough for a race,

race, for a warfare, for a pilgrimage: it is long enough to fight and contend with this world, and all the temptations of it: it is long enough to know this world, to diſcover the vanity of it, and to live above it. It is long enough, by the grace of God, to purge and refine our minds, and to prepare ourſelves to live for ever in God's preſence. And when we are in any meaſure prepared for heaven, and poſſeſſed with great and paſſionate deſires of it, we ſhall think it a great deal too long to be kept out of it.

SECT. III.

What uſe to make of the fixed term of human life.

(2.) LET us conſider what wiſe uſe is to be made of this. And here are two things diſtinctly to be conſidered: 1. That the general term of human life is fixed and determined by God. 2. That this common term and period of life, at the utmoſt extent of it, is but very ſhort.

1. That the general term of human life is fixed and determined by God. And this is capable of very wiſe improvements. For,

1*ſt*. When we know that we cannot live above

above threeſcore or fourſcore years, or ſome few years over or under, we ſhould not extend our hopes and expectations, and deſigns beyond this term. 2*dly*, We ſhould frequently count our days, and obſerve how our lives waſte, and draw near to eternity. 3*dly*, When this period draws nigh, and death comes within view, it more eſpecially concerns us to apply ourſelves to a more ſerious and ſolemn preparation for death.

1*ſt*, We ſhould not extend our hopes and expectations and deſigns beyond this term, which God has fixed for the concluſion of our lives; we ſhould not live as if we were immortal creatures, who are never to die: for if God hath ſet bounds to our lives, it is abſurd for us to expect to live any longer, unleſs we hope to alter the decrees of Heaven.

And yet it is more abſurd, if it be poſſible, to extend our hopes and deſires, our projects and deſigns for this world, beyond the term of our living here. For how unreaſonable is it to trouble ourſelves about this world longer than we are to continue in it? And yet, if this were obſerved, it would eaſe us of a great deal of labour and care, and deliver the world from great troubles and diſorders, which the

the deſigns and projects of future ages create.

Men might ſee ſome end of their labours and of their cares, of increaſing riches, and adding houſe to houſe, and field to field, did they ſtint their deſires with their lives, did they conſider how long they were to live, and what is a ſufficient and neceſſary proviſion for their continuance here. Whereas now the generality of mankind drudge on to the laſt moment they have to live, and heap up riches till they know no end of them, as if their lives, and their enjoyments of them, were to have no end neither.

The only tolerable excuſe that can be made for this is the care of poſterity, to leave a liberal proviſion for children, that they may live happily after us. But this indeed is rather an excuſe than a reaſon; for thus we ſee it is when there is no ſuch reaſon for it, when men have no children to provide for, nor, it may be, any relations for whom they are much concerned; or when they have a ſufficient proviſion for all their children, to encourage their induſtry and virtue, though not to maintain them in idleneſs and vice, which no wiſe and good father would deſire: nay, it may be, when they have no other heir to an overgrown eſtate, but either a daughter, whoſe fortune

fortune may make her a rich prey, as is too often ſeen; or a prodigal ſon, who is ruined already by the expectation of ſo great a fortune, and will quickly be even with his fortune, and ruin that when he has it.

A competent proviſion for children is a juſt reaſon to continue our induſtry, tho' we have enough for ourſelves as long as we live; but to make them rich and great is not. The piety and charity of parents, which entail a bleſſing upon their poſterity, and an induſtrious and virtuous education of children is a better inheritance for them than a great eſtate. But men who are ſo intent, to the very laſt, upon increaſing their eſtates, ſeldom do it for any other reaſon but to ſatisfy their own inſatiable thirſt, which is to hoard up riches for a time when they can't enjoy them, to provide for their living in this world a much longer time than they know they can poſſibly live in it. This is much greater folly than the man in the parable was guilty of, whoſe ground brought forth plentifully, and he pulled down his barns, and built greater, and ſaid to his ſoul, "Soul, thou "haſt much goods laid up for many years, "take thine eaſe, eat, drink, and be mer-"ry." He was ſo wiſe as to know when he had enough, and when he was fit to retire and take his eaſe: yet God ſaid unto

him, "Thou fool, this night thy ſoul ſhall "be required of thee; and then whoſe "ſhall all theſe things be which thou haſt "provided?" *Luke* xii. 16, *&c.*

Thus, how big are men with projects and deſigns, which there is little hope ſhould ever take effect while they live! eſpecially aſpiring monarchs and buſy politicians, who draw the ſcheme and frame their deſign of an univerſal empire, through a long ſeries of events, or meditate changes and alterations of government, of the laws and religion of a nation, by inſenſible ſteps and methods: which, though it were never ſo hopeful a project, they cannot hope to live to ſee effected; and therefore exceed their own bounds, and trouble the world at preſent with what no body now living may ever be concerned in: they undertake to govern the world when they are dead and gone; whereas every age brings forth new ſcenes of affairs, and a new ſet of politicians. Would men but confine their cares and projects within the bounds of their own lives, and mind only what concerns themſelves and their own times, they would live more at eaſe, and the world enjoy more peace and quiet than now it is ever likely to do. And yet one would think this very reaſonable, not to concern ourſelves about the world any longer than we are like to

live in it; to do no injury to poſterity, as near as we can, and to do what good we can for them, without diſturbing the preſent peace and good government of the world; but to leave the care of the next age to thoſe who ſhall ſucceed, and to that good providence which takes care of all ages and generations of men.

2dly, Since we know the common period of human life, we ſhould frequently count our days, and obſerve how our lives waſte, and draw near to eternity. Our time ſlides away inſenſibly, and few men take notice how it goes; they find their ſtrength and vigour continue without any decay, and they reckon upon living threeſcore and ten or fourſcore years; but ſeldom conſider, that, it may be, thirty or forty years are already gone, that is, the beſt half of our lives: they put a cheat upon themſelves, by computing the whole duration of their lives, without conſidering how much of this is already paſt, and how little of it is to come; which if men ſhould ſeriouſly think of, they would not be ſo apt to flatter themſelves with a long life; for no man accounts twenty or thirty years a long life, and that is the moſt they have to live now, though they ſhould attain to the longeſt period of human life: much leſs could they flatter themſelves with a long

long life, when they probably could not reckon above fifteen or ten years to come. And would men obſerve how their life ſhortens every day, this, if any thing, would make them grow chary of their time, and begin to think of living, that is, of minding the true ends and purpoſes of life, of doing the work for which they came into the world, and which they muſt do before they die, or they are miſerable for ever.

3*dly*, When men draw near the end of their reckoning, nay, it may be, are paſt the common reckoning of mankind, it more eſpecially concerns them to apply themſelves to a more ſerious and ſolemn preparation for death. For how vigorous ſoever their age is, death cannot be far off; it would be unpardonable in them to be deceived with the hopes of living much longer, who have already attained to the common period of human life, and are in the borders and confines, nay in the very quarters of death, and have already, if I may ſo ſpeak, borrowed ſome years from the other world.

Now, when I ſpeak of ſuch men's preparing for death, I do not mean that they ſhould then begin to think of dying; that is a great deal of the lateſt to begin ſuch a work: though, if they have not done it before, it is without doubt high time to

begin it then, in the laſt minute of their lives, and to do what they can in that little time that remains, to obtain their pardon from God for ſpending a long life in ſin and vanity, and in a forgetfulneſs of their Maker and Redeemer.

But that which I now intend concerns thoſe who have thought of dying long before, and governed their lives under the conduct and influence of ſuch thoughts; and therefore are not wholly unprepared for death, but are ready to welcome it whenever it comes: but there is a decent way of meeting death, which becomes ſuch men, which I call a more ſolemn preparation for it; that is, when their condition and circumſtances of life will permit it, to take a timely leave of the world, and to withdraw from the noiſe and buſineſs of it; when they are placed juſt in the confines of both worlds, to direct their faces wholly to that world whither they are going, to ſpend the little remains of their lives in converſing with themſelves, with God, and with the other world.

Firſt, In converſing with themſelves, which, God knows, very few men do while they are engaged in the buſineſs of this world: the cares of life, or the pleaſures of it, our families or our friends, or

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ſtrangers themſelves, take us from ourſelves; and therefore it is fit, before men go out of this world, that they ſhould recover the poſſeſſion of themſelves, and grow a little more acquainted and intimate with themſelves; that they ſhould retire from the world to take a more thorough review of their lives and actions, what they have ſtill to do, to make their peace with God and their own conſciences; whether there be not any ſin which they have not thoroughly repented of, and heartily begged God's pardon for; any injury they have done their neighbour, for which they have not made ſufficient reſtitution and reparation; whether they have any quarrel with any man, which is not compoſed and reconciled; whether there is any part of their duty which they have formerly too much neglected, as charity to the poor, the wiſe education and inſtitution of their children and families, and to apply themſelves to a more diligent diſcharge of it; what diſtempers there are in their minds which ſtill need to be rectified; what graces are weakeſt, what paſſions are moſt diſorderly and unmortified, and to apply proper remedies to them.

This is an excellent preparation for death, becauſe it will give us great hope

and aſſurance in dying; it gives us peace and ſatisfaction in our own minds, by a thorough knowledge of our own ſtate, and by rectifying whatever was amiſs; it delivers our conſciences from guilty fears, and diſarms death of ſtings and terrors: for the ſting of death is ſin; and when this ſting is pulled out, we have nothing elſe to contend with but ſome little natural averſions to dying, which are more eaſily conquered.

Thus, in this preparatory retirement from the world, we ſhould ſpend great portions of our time in the worſhip of God, in our public and private devotions; for commonly men of buſineſs are very much in arrears with God upon this account: in their active age they had little time to ſpare, or little mind to ſpare it, for the uſes of religion: and therefore we may well retire ſome time before we die, to make up that defect, and, when we have done with this world, to give up ourſelves wholly to the ſervice of God. We ſhould now be very importunate in our prayers to God, that, for the merits and interceſſion of Chriſt, he would freely pardon all the ſins, and frailties, and errors of our paſt life, and give us ſuch a comfortable hope and ſenſe of his love to us, as may ſupport us in the hour of death, and

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ſweeten the terrors and agonies of it. We ſhould meditate on the great love of God in ſending Chriſt into the world to ſave ſinners, and contemplate the heighth, and depth, and length, and breadth of that love of God which paſſeth all human underſtanding. We ſhould repreſent to ourſelves the wonderful condeſcenſion of the Son of God in becoming man, his amazing goodneſs in dying for ſinners, the juſt for the unjuſt, to reconcile us to God. And when we have warmed our ſouls with ſuch thoughts as theſe, we ſhould break forth into raptures and extaſies of devotion, in the praiſe of our Maker and Redeemer: "Worthy is the Lamb "that was ſlain to receive power, and "riches, and wiſdom, and ſtrength, and "honour, and glory, and bleſſing. Bleſ- "ſing, and honour, and glory, and power "be unto him that ſitteth on the throne, "and to the Lamb, for ever and ever," *Rev.* v. 12, 13.

And, beſides other reaſons which make this a very proper preparation for death, this accuſtoms us to the work and employment of the next world: for heaven is a life of devotion and praiſe; there we ſhall ſee God, and admire and adore him, and ſing eternally hallelujahs to him. And therefore nothing can ſo diſpoſe and pre-

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pare us for heaven, as to have our hearts ready tuned to the praiſes of God, raviſhed with his love, tranſported with his glory and perfection, and ſwallowed up in the moſt profound and humble adorations of him.

Thus, when we are going into another world, it becomes us moſt to have our thoughts there; to conſider what a bleſſed place that is, where we ſhall be delivered from all the fears, and ſorrows, and temptations of this world; where we ſhall ſee God and the bleſſed Jeſus, and converſe with angels and glorified ſpirits, and live an endleſs life, without fear of dying; where there is nothing but perfect love and peace; no croſs intereſts and factions to contend with, no ſtorms to ruffle or diſcompoſe our joy and reſt to all eternity; where there is no pain, no ſickneſs, no labour, no care to refreſh the wearineſs or to repair the decays of a mortal body, not ſo much as the image of death to interrupt our conſtant enjoyments; where there is a perpetual day, and an eternal calm; where our ſouls ſhall attain their utmoſt perfection in knowledge and virtue; where we ſhall ſerve God not with dull, and ſleepy, and unaffecting devotions, but with piercing thoughts, with life and vigour, with raviſhment and tranſport: in a word,

where

where there are ſuch things "as neither "eye hath ſeen, nor ear heard, neither "hath it entered into the heart of man to "conceive."

Theſe are proper thoughts for a man who is to compoſe himſelf for death; not to think of the pale and ghaſtly looks of death, when he ſhall be wrapt up in his winding-ſheet; not to think of the dark and melancholy retirements of the grave, where his body ſhall rot and putrify, till it be raiſed up again immortal and glorious: but to lift up his eyes to heaven, to view that lightſome and happy country; with Moſes to aſcend up into the mount, to take a proſpect of the heavenly Canaan, whither he is going. This will conquer even the natural averſions to death, and make us, with St Paul, deſirous to be diſſolved, and to be with Chriſt, which is beſt of all; make it as eaſy to us to leave this world for heaven, as it is to remove into a more pleaſant and wholeſome air, or into a more convenient and beautiful houſe. So eaſy, ſo pleaſant will it be to die with ſuch thoughts as theſe about us.

This indeed ought to be the conſtant exerciſe of the Chriſtian life; it is fit for all times and for all perſons; and without ſome degree of it, it is impoſſible to conquer the temptations of the world, or to live

live in the practice of divine and heavenly virtues. But this ought to be the conſtant buſineſs, or entertainment rather, of thoſe happy men who have lived long enough in the world, to take a fair leave of it; who have run through all the ſcenes and ſtages of human life, and have now death and another world in view and proſpect.

And it is this makes a retirement from the world ſo neceſſary or very uſeful; not merely to eaſe our bodily labours, and to get a little reſt from buſineſs, to diſſolve in ſloth and idleneſs, or to wander about to ſeek a companion, or to hear news, or to talk politics, or to find out ſome way to ſpend time, which now lyes upon our hands, and is more uneaſy and troubleſome to us than buſineſs was. This is a more dangerous ſtate, and does more indiſpoſe us for a happy death, than all the cares and troubles of an active life: but we muſt retire from this world, to have more leiſure and greater opportunities to prepare for the next, to adorn and cultivate our minds, and dreſs our ſouls like a bride who is adorned to meet her bridegroom.

When men converſe much in this world, and are diſtracted with the cares and buſineſs of it; when they live in a crowd of cuſtomers

cuſtomers or clients, and are hurried from their ſhops to the Exchange or Cuſtom-houſe, or from their chambers to the bar; and, when they have diſcharged one obligation, are preſſed hard by another, ſo that at night they have hardly ſpirits left to ſay their prayers, nor any time for them in the morning; and the Lord's day itſelf is thought more proper for reſt and refreſhment than devotion: I ſay, what dull, cold apprehenſions muſt ſuch men have of another world! and, after all the care we can take, how will this world inſinuate itſelf into our affections, when it employs our time and thoughts, when our whole buſineſs is buying and ſelling, and driving good bargains, and making conveyances and ſettlements of eſtates! how will this diſorder our paſſions, occaſion feuds and quarrels, give us a tincture of pride, ambition, covetouſneſs! that there is work enough after a buſy life, even for very good men, to waſh out theſe ſtains and pollutions, and to get the taſte and reliſh of this world out of their mouths, and to revive and quicken the ſenſe of God and of another world.

This is a ſufficient reaſon for ſuch men, as I obſerved before, to think when it is time to leave off, and, if not wholly to withdraw from the world, yet to contract their

their business, and to have the command of it, that they may have more leisure to take care of their souls, before they have so near a call and summons to death; but much more necessary is it, when death is even at the door, and by the course of nature we know that it is so.

It is very proper to leave the world, before we are removed out of it, that we may know how to live without it, that we may not carry any hankerings after this world with us into the next: and therefore it is very fitting that there should be a kind of middle state between this world and the next; that is, that we should withdraw from this world, and wean ourselves from it, even while we are in it; which will make it more easy to part with this world, and make us more fit to go to the next. But it seems strangely indecent, unless the necessities of their families, or the necessity of the public, call for it and exact it, to see men who are just a-going out of the world, who, it may be, bow as much under their riches as under their age, plunging themselves over head and ears in this world, courting new honours and preferments with as much zeal as those who are but entering into the world. It is to be feared such men think very little

of another world, and will never be ſatisfied with earth till they are buried in it.

SECT. IV.

What uſe to make of the ſhortneſs of human life.

(3.) AS the general period of human life is fixed and determined by God; ſo this term of life, at the utmoſt extent of it, is but very ſhort. For what are threeſcore and ten, or fourſcore years? how ſoon do they paſs away like a dream? and, when they are gone, how few and empty do they appear? The beſt way to be ſenſible of this, is not to look forward, for we fancy time to come to be much longer than we find it; but to look backward upon the time which is paſt, and as long as we can remember; and how ſuddenly are thirty or forty years gone! how little do we remember how they are paſt! but gone they are, and the reſt are going apace, while we eat, and drink, and ſleep; and when they are gone too, we ſhall be ſenſible that all together was but very ſhort. Now, from hence I ſhall obſerve ſeveral things of very great uſe for the government of our lives.

1. If our lives be ſo very ſhort, it concerns us to loſe none of our time: for does it become us to be prodigal of our time,

when we have ſo little of it? We either ought to make as much of our lives as we can, or not complain that they are ſhort; for that is a greater reproach to ourſelves, than to the order of nature, and the providence of God; for it ſeems we have more time than we care to live in, more than we think neceſſary to improve to the true ends and purpoſes of living: and if we can ſpare ſo much of our lives, it ſeems they are too long for us, how ſhort ſoever they are in themſelves. And when our lives are too long already for the generality of mankind to improve wiſely, why ſhould God give us more time to play with and to ſquander away? And yet let us all reflect upon ourſelves, and conſider how much of our lives we have perfectly loſt; how careleſs we have been of our time, which is the moſt precious thing in the world; how we have given it to every body that will take it, and given away ſo much of ourſelves and our own being with it.

Should men ſit down, and take a review of themſelves, and draw up a particular account of the expence of their time, after they came to years of diſcretion and underſtanding, what a ſhameful bill would it be! what unreaſonable abatements of life! how little time would there be at the foot of the account, which might be called living!

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So much extraordinary for eating, and drinking, and ſleeping beyond what the ſupport and refreſhment of nature required; ſo much in courtſh p, wantonneſs and luſt; ſo much in drinking and revelling; ſo much for the recovery of the laſt night's debauch; ſo much in gaming and maſquerades; ſo much in paying and receiving formal and impertinent viſits, in idle and extravagant diſcourſes, in cenſuring and reviling our neighbours or our governors; ſo much in dreſſing and adorning our bodies; ſo many blank and long parentheſes of life, waſted in doing nothing, or in counting the ſlow and tedious minutes, or chiding the ſun for making no more haſte down, and delaying their evening aſſignations. But how little would there appear, in moſt mens account, ſpent to the true end of living?

The very naming of theſe things is ſufficient to convince any conſidering man, that this is really a miſpending of time, and a flinging away great part of a very ſhort life to no purpoſe. But, to make you all ſenſible of this, conſider with me when we may be ſaid to loſe our time; for time paſſes away very ſwiftly, and we can no more hold it than we can ſtop the chariot-wheels of the ſun. But all time that is paſt is not loſt: indeed no time is our own, but what is paſt or preſent; and its being

paſt makes it never the leſs our own, if ever it was ſo. But then, we loſe our time,

1*ſt*, When it turns to no account to us when it is gone, when we are never the better for it in body or ſoul. This is the true way of judging, by our own ſenſe and feeling, whether we have ſpent our time well or ill, by obſerving what reliſh it leaves upon our minds, and what the effects of it are when it is paſt. How vainly ſoever men ſpend their time, they find ſome pleaſure, and diverſion, and entertainment in it, while it laſts; but the next morning it is all vaniſhed, as their night-dreams are; and if they are not the worſe for it, they find themſelves never the better. And this is a certain ſign that our time was vainly and fooliſhly ſpent, that when it is gone it can be brought into no account of our lives, but that of idle expences. Whatever is good, whatever is in any degree uſeful, leaves ſome ſatisfaction when it is gone; and time ſo ſpent we can place to our account, and all ſuch time is not loſt: but men who ſpend one day after another in mirth, and jollity, and entertainments, in viſits, or gaming, *&c.* can give no other account of it, but that it is a pleaſant way of ſpending time. And that is the true name for it, not living, but ſpending time, which they know not how otherwiſe to paſs away.

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When their time is ſpent, they have all they intended, and their enjoyments paſs away with their time, and there is an end of both: and it were ſomewhat more tolerable if they themſelves could end with their time too. But when men muſt outlive time, and the effects of time muſt laſt to eternity; that time which if it has no ill, yet has no good effects more laſting than itſelf, is utterly loſt.

2*dly*, To be ſure that time is doubly loſt which we cannot review without amazement and horror; I mean, in which we have contracted ſome great guilt, which we have not only ſpent vainly, but wickedly, which we ourſelves wiſh had never been, which we deſire to forget, and could be glad that both God and man could forget it too. For is not that loſt time which loſes us, which undoes us, which diſtracts us with guilty fears, which we would give all the world we could loſe out of the account of our lives, and could loſe the very remembrance of it? I think that ſomewhat worſe than loſt time which forfeits a bleſſed eternity, and for which men muſt loſe their ſouls for ever.

3*dly*, That is loſt time too which men muſt live over again, and tread back their ſteps, like him that has miſtaken his way. Not that we can recall our paſt time, and

thoſe minutes that are fled from us; but we muſt ſubſtitute ſome of our remaining time in its room, and begin our lives again, and undo what we had formerly done. This is the caſe of thoſe who have ſpent great part of their lives ill, whenever they are convinced of their folly and danger; they muſt give all their paſt lives for loſt; and, it may be, when half, or two thirds, or more of their lives are ſpent, they muſt then begin to live, and to undo, by repentance and reformation, the errors, and follies, and impieties of their former lives. Now, I ſuppoſe all men will confeſs that time to be loſt which they muſt unlive again: to be ſure penitents are very ſenſible it is; and I wiſh all thoſe would conſider it, who reſolve to ſpend their youthful and vigorous age in ſin, and to repent hereafter; that is, they reſolve to fling away the greateſt and the beſt part of their lives, and to begin to live when they ſee themſelves a-dying. This, I am ſure, is no remedy againſt a ſhort life, to reſolve not to live one third of it.

2. Since our life is ſo very ſhort, it becomes us to live as much as we can in ſo ſhort a time: for we muſt not meaſure the length or ſhortneſs of our lives by the days, or months, or years; this is the meaſure of our duration or being: but to live

and

and to be are two things, and of a diſtinct conſideration and account.

To live, when we ſpeak of a man, ſignifies to act like a reaſonable creature, to exerciſe his underſtanding and will upon ſuch objects as anſwer the dignity and perfection of human nature, to be employed in ſuch actions as are proper to his nature, and diſtinguiſh a man from all other creatures. And therefore, though a man muſt eat and drink, and perform the other offices of a natural life, which are common to him with beaſts; yet this is not to live like a man, any otherwiſe than as theſe common actions are governed by reaſon and rules of virtue: but he who minds nothing higher than this, lives like a beaſt, not like a man. A life of reaſon, religion and virtue, is properly the life of a man, becauſe it is peculiar to him, and diſtingniſhes him from all the other creatures in this world: and therefore he who improves his knowledge and underſtanding moſt, who has his paſſions under the beſt government, who does moſt good, and makes himſelf moſt uſeful to the world, though he does not continue longer, yet he lives more and longer than other men: that is, he exerts more frequent and perfect acts of a rational life.

But, beſides this, this life is only in order

order to a better life; it is not for itſelf, but only a paſſage to, and a ſtate of trial and probation for immortality; and it were hardly worth the while to come into the world on any meaner deſign. And therefore he lives moſt who improves the grace of God to make himſelf moſt fit for heaven, and qualified for the greateſt rewards, for the richeſt and brighteſt crowns; who knows God moſt, and worſhips him in the moſt perfect manner, with the greateſt raviſhments and tranſport of ſpirit; who lives moſt above this world, in the exerciſe of the moſt divine virtues; who does moſt ſervice to God in the world, and improves all his talents to the beſt advantage; in a word, who moſt adorns and perfects his own mind, brings moſt glory to God, and does moſt good to men. Such a man at thirty years old has lived more, nay indeed may properly be ſaid to have lived longer, than an old decrepit ſinner; for he has not lived at all to the purpoſes of a man, or to the ends of the other world. That man has lived a great while, how ſhort ſoever the time be, who is old enough for heaven and for eternity, who has laid up riches and glorious treaſures for himſelf in the other world, who has anſwered the ends of his life, and is fit to remove out of it. This is the true way

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of meaſuring our lives, by acts of piety and virtue, by our improvements in knowledge and grace, and wiſdom, by our ripeneſs for another world. And therefore, if we would live a great while in this world, we muſt, *1ſt*, Begin to live betimes. *2dly*, We muſt have a care of all interruptions and intermiſſions of life. *3dly*, We muſt live apace.

1ſt, We muſt begin to live betimes; that is, we muſt begin betimes to live like men and like Chriſtians, to live to God and to another world; that is, in a word, to be good betimes: for thoſe who begin to live with the firſt bloomings of reaſon and underſtanding, and give early and youthful ſpecimens of piety and virtue; if they reach to old age, they live three times as long as thoſe who count indeed as many years as they do, but, it may be, have not lived a third of their time, but have loſt it in ſin and folly. The firſt can look back to the very beginning of his life, and enjoy all his paſt years ſtill, review them with pleaſure and ſatisfaction, and bring them all to account. But a late penitent muſt date his life from his repentance and reformation: he dares look no farther back, for all beyond is loſt, or worſe than loſt: it is like looking back upon the rude chaos, which was nothing

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but confuſion and darkneſs before God formed the world: ſuch is the life of a ſinner before this new birth and new creation: and therefore he has but a very little way to look back, can give but a very ſhort account of his life, has but a very few years of his life which he dares own, and carry into the other world with him.

2*dly*, We muſt have a care of all interruptions and intermiſſions of life; that is, of falling back into ſin again after ſome hopeful beginnings. This is often ſeen, that thoſe who, by the care, and good government, and wiſe inſtructions of parents and tutors, have had the principles of virtue and piety early inſtilled into them, and have had a good reliſh of it themſelves; yet, when they are got looſe from theſe reſtraints, and fall into ill company, and into the way of temptations, have a mind to try another kind of life, and to taſte thoſe pleaſures which they ſee mankind ſo fond of, and too often try ſo long, till they grow as great ſtrangers to piety and virtue, as they were ignorant of vice before. Now, if ſuch men ever be reclaimed again, yet all their early beginnings of life are loſt; for here is a long interruption and intermiſſion of life, which ſets them back in the account of eternity.

And

And thus it is proportionably in every wilful ſin we commit; it makes a break in our lives; does not only ſtop our progreſs for a while, but ſets us backward. But he who begins betimes to live, without any, or very few and very ſhort interruptions, will be able to reckon a very long life, by that time he attains to the common period of human life.

3*dly*, Eſpecially if we live apace. There is a living apace, as ſome call it, not to lengthen, but to ſhorten life; when men, by minding their buſineſs well, can in ten or twenty years deſtroy ſuch a conſtitution of body, and exhauſt that vital heat and vigour, which would have laſted another man ſixty or eighty years. This is to live much in a little time, and to make an end of their lives quickly: and the living apace I mean, is to live much alſo in a little time, but to double and treble our lives, not to ſhorten them; that is, to do all the good that ever we can; for the more good we do the more we live. Life is not mere duration, but action: time is not life; but we live, that is, we act in time: and he who does two days work in one, lives as much in one day as other men do in two. He who in one year does as much improve his mind in knowledge, and wiſdom, and all Chriſtian graces and virtues, worſhips God

God as much and more devoutly, does as much good to the world in all conditions and relations of life, as another man does in two, or three, or four; he lives so much proportionably longer than those other men; he does the work of so much time, and this is equivalent to, nay much better than living so much time. For he who can have the reward of two or three hundred years in this world, and not live above threescore or fourscore here, I take to be a much happier man than he who spends two hundred years in this world. This is the best way of lengthening our lives by living doubly or trebly; which will make a vast addition to our lives in fifty or sixty years: and then there will be no reason to complain of the shortness of them.

3. If our lives are so very short, as most men complain they are, surely we have little reason to complain of spending the whole of these short lives in the service of God for an eternal reward. What are threescore or fourscore years when compared to an eternity? and therefore, setting aside all the present advantages and pleasures of a life of religion, that this is only to live, to improve and perfect our own natures, to serve God, and to do good in the world; suppose there were nothing in religion but hardships and difficulties, a

perpetual force and violence to nature, a conſtant war with the world and the fleſh; cannot we endure all this ſo ſhort a time for an endleſs reward? Men think their days-work very well ſpent, when they receive their wages at night, and can go home and ſup chearfully with their family, and ſleep ſweetly, as labouring men uſe to do, all night: and yet our Saviour compares all the work and induſtry of our lives to day-labourers, in the parable of the houſeholder, who at ſeveral hours of the day hired labourers to work in his vineyard, and paid them their wages at night, *Matth.* xx. 1, *&c.*

We all confeſs that threeſcore and ten years, if we live ſo long, is but a very ſhort time in itſelf, and quickly paſſes away; I am ſure we all think ſo, when it is gone: and yet conſider how much of this time is cut off by infancy, childhood and youth, while we are under the care and conduct of parents and governors, and are not our own men. How much is ſpent in ſleeping, in eating, and drinking, and neceſſary diverſions, for the ſupport and repair of theſe mortal bodies; in our neceſſary buſineſs, to provide for our families, or to ſerve the public, which God allows and requires of us, and accounts it ſerving himſelf, while we live like men, are ſober, and temperate,

and juſt, and faithful to our truſt; which we ſhould do for our own ſakes, and which all well-governed ſocieties require of us, without any conſideration of another world? So that there is but very little of this very ſhort life ſpent purely in the ſervice of God, and in the care of our ſouls, and the concernments of a future ſtate: and is this too much for an eternity of bliſs and happineſs? To complain of ſobriety, and temperance, and moral honeſty, as ſuch inſufferable burdens, that a man had better be damned than ſubmit to them, is not ſo much to complain of the laws of God, as of all the wiſe governments in the world, even in the heathen world, which branded all theſe vices with infamy, and reſtrained and corrected them with condign puniſhment: it is to complain of human nature, which has made all theſe vices infamous; and to think it better to be damned than to live like men. And yet above two thirds of our time require the exerciſe of few other virtues but theſe; and whatever difficulties men may imagine in other acts of religion, if they can poſſibly think it ſo intolerable to love the greateſt and the beſt being, to praiſe and adore him to whom we owe ourſelves and all we have: to aſk the ſupply of our wants from him, who will be ſure to give, if we faithfully aſk;

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to raiſe our hearts above this world, which is a ſcene of vanity, emptineſs or miſery; and to delight ourſelves in the hopes and expectations of great and eternal happineſs, wherein the very life of religion conſiſts: I ſay, if theſe be ſuch very difficult and uneaſy things, (which one would wonder how they came to be difficult, or why they ſhould be thought ſo) yet they employ very little of our time; and methinks a man might bear it, to be happy for ever. I am ſure men take a great deal more pains for this world than heaven would coſt them; and when they have it, don't live to enjoy it. And if this be thought worth their while, ſurely a ſhort life ſpent in the ſervice of God, to obtain an endleſs and eternal happineſs, is the beſt and moſt advantageous ſpending our time. And we muſt have a very mean opinion of heaven and eternal happineſs, if we think it not worth the obedience and ſervice of a few years, how difficult ſoever that were.

4. If our lives are ſo very ſhort at their utmoſt extent, the ſinful pleaſures of this world can be no great temptation, when compared to an eternity of happineſs or miſery. Thoſe ſenſual pleaſures which men are ſo fond of, and for the ſake of which they break the laws of God, and provoke his juſtice, forfeit immortal life, and expoſe

themſelves to all the miſeries and ſufferings of eternal death, can laſt no longer than we live in this world; and how little a while is that? When we put off theſe bodies, all bodily pleaſures periſh with them: nay, indeed, as our bodies die and decay by degrees, before they tumble into the grave, ſo do our pleaſures ſenſibly decay too. As ſhort as our lives are, men may outlive ſome of their moſt beloved vices; and therefore, how luſcious ſoever they may be, ſuch ſhort and dying pleaſures ought not to come in competition with eternal happineſs or miſery. Whatever things are in their own nature, the value of them increaſes or diminiſhes according to the length or ſhortneſs of their enjoyments: that which will laſt our lives, and make them eaſy and comfortable, is to be preferred by wiſe men before the moſt raviſhing enjoyments of a day; and a happineſs which would outlaſt our lives, and reach to eternity, is to be preferred before the periſhing enjoyments of a ſhort life; unleſs men can think it better to be happy for threeſcore years than for ever; nay, unleſs men think the enjoyment of threeſcore years a ſufficient recompence for eternal want and miſery.

5. The ſhortneſs of our lives is a ſufficient anſwer to all thoſe arguments againſt providence

providence taken from the proſperity of bad men, and the miſeries and afflictions of the good; for both of them are ſo ſhort, that they are nothing in the account of eternity. Were this life to be conſidered by itſelf, without any relation to a future ſtate, the difficulty would be greater, but not very great; becauſe a ſhort happineſs, or ſhort miſery, chequered and intermixed, as all the happineſs and miſeries of this life are, is not very conſiderable, nor were it worth the while either to make objections againſt providence, or to anſwer them, if death put an end to us.

Bad men, who make theſe objections againſt providence, are very well contented to take the world as they find it, ſo they may have it without a providence; which is a ſign that it is not their diſlike of this world (though many times they ſuffer as much in it as good men do) which makes them quarrel at providence, but the dread and fear of another world. And this proves that they think this world a very tolerable place, whether there be a providence or not. And if ſo ſhort a life as this is be but tolerable, it is a ſufficient juſtification of providence, that this life is well enough for its continuance; a very mixed and imperfect ſtate indeed, but very ſhort too: ſuch a ſtate as bad men

themſelves would like very well without another life after it, and ſuch a ſtate as good men like very well with another life to follow. It is not a ſpite at human life which makes them reject a providence, as any one would gueſs who hears them object their own proſperity, and the calamities of good men, as arguments againſt providence, both which they like very well. And whatever there may be in theſe objections, ſuppoſing there were no other life after this, yet, when they all vaniſh at the very naming of another life, where good men ſhall be rewarded and the wicked puniſhed, it is ridiculous to prove that there is no other life after this, becauſe rewards and puniſhments are not diſpenſed with that exact juſtice in this life, as we might ſuppoſe God would obſerve, if there were no other life. To prove that there is no other life after this, becauſe good and bad men do not receive their juſt rewards in this life, is an argument which becomes the wit of an Atheiſt; for they muſt firſt take it for granted that there is no providence, before this argument can prove any thing. For if there be a providence, then the proſperity of bad men, and the ſufferings of the good, is a much better argument that there is another life after this, where rewards and puniſhments

puniſhments ſhall be more equally diſtributed. Thus, when we diſpute againſt providence from the proſperity of bad men, and the calamities of the good, before this can prove any thing, they muſt take it for granted that there is no other life after this, where good men ſhall be rewarded, and the wicked puniſhed; for if there be, it is eaſy enough to juſtify the providence of God as to the preſent proſperity of bad men, and the ſufferings of the good. So that they muſt of neceſſity diſpute in a circle, as the Papiſts do between the church and the ſcriptures, when they either prove that there is no providence, or no life after this, from the unequal rewards and puniſhments of good and bad men in this world: for in effect they prove that there is no providence, becauſe there is no life after this; or that there is no life after this, becauſe there is no providence. For the proſperity of bad men, and the ſufferings of the good, proves neither of them, unleſs you take the other for granted: and if you will prove them both by this medium, you muſt take them both for granted by turns; and this is the eaſier and ſafer way, to take them both for granted, without expoſing yourſelves to the ſcorn of wiſe men by ſuch kind of proofs. But yet, though this were no objection

jection againſt the being of another world and a providence, yet had the proſperity of bad men, and the calamities of the good, continued ſome hundred years, it had been a greater difficulty and a greater temptation than now it is. The proſperity of the wicked is a much leſs objection, when it is ſo eaſily anſwered as the Pſalmiſt does; "Yet a little diligently conſider his "place, and it ſhall not be," *Pſal.* xxxvii. 10. when the very ſame perſons who have been the ſpectators and witneſſes of his proſperous villainies, live to ſee a quick and ſudden end of him; "I have ſeen the "wicked in great power, and ſpreading "himſelf like a green bay-tree; yet he "paſſed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I "ſought him, but he could not be found," ver. 35, 36. And this is enough alſo to ſupport the ſpirits of good men; "For "this cauſe we faint not; but though our "outward man periſh, yet the inward "man is renewed day by day. For our "light affliction, which is but for a mo-"ment, worketh for us a far more ex-"ceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 *Cor.* iv. 16, 17.

SECT. V.

The time, and manner, and circumſtances of every particular man's death, is not determined by an abſolute and unconditional decree.

2. THOUGH God, who knows all things, does know alſo the time, and manner, and circumſtances of every particular man's death; yet it does not appear that he has, by an abſolute and unconditional decree, fixed and determined the particular time of every man's death. This is that famous queſtion which Beverovicius, a learned phyſician, was ſo much concerned to have reſolved, and conſulted ſo many learned men about; as ſuppoſing it would be a great injury to his profeſſion, did men believe that the time of their death was ſo abſolutely determined by God, that they could neither die ſooner nor live longer than that fatal period, whether they took the advice and preſcriptions of the phyſicians or not. But this was a vain fear; for there are ſome ſpeculations which men never live by, how vehemently ſoever they contend for them: a ſceptic, who pretends there is nothing certain, and will diſpute with you

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as long as you pleaſe about it, yet will not venture his own arguments ſo far as to leap into fire or water, nor to ſtand before the mouth of a loaded cannon, when you give fire to it. Thus men who talk moſt about fatal neceſſity and abſolute decrees, yet they will eat and drink to preſerve themſelves in health, and take phyſic when they are ſick; and as heartily repent of their ſins, and vow amendment and reformation, when they think themſelves a-dying, as if they did not believe one word of ſuch abſolute decrees and fatal neceſſity, as they talk of at other times.

I do not intend to engage in this diſpute of neceſſity and fate, of preſcience and abſolute decrees, which will be diſputes as long as the world laſts, unleſs men grow wiſer than to trouble themſelves with ſuch queſtions as are above their reach, and which they can never have a clear notion and perception of: but all that I intend, is to ſhew you, according to the ſcripture-account of it, that the period of our lives is not ſo peremptorily determined by God, but that we may lengthen or ſhorten them, live longer or die ſooner, according as we behave ourſelves in this world.

Now, this is very plain from all thoſe places of ſcripture, where God promiſes long life to good men, and threatens to

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ſhorten the lives of the wicked, *Pſal.* xci. 16. " With long life will I ſatisfy him, " and ſhew him my ſalvation." Solomon tells us of Wiſdom, " Length of days " is in her right hand, and in her left " riches and honour," *Prov.* iii. 16. " The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, " but the years of the wicked ſhall be " ſhortened," *Prov.* x. 27. Thus God has promiſed long life to thoſe who honour their parents, in the fifth commandment; and the ſame promiſe is made in more general terms to thoſe who obſerve the ſtatutes and commandments of God, *Deut.* iv. 40. Upon the ſame condition God promiſed long life to King Solomon, 1 *Kings* iii. 14. " And if thou wilt walk " in my ways, to keep my ſtatutes and " commandments, as thy father David " did walk; then will I lengthen thy " days." The ſame is ſuppoſed in David's prayer to God, not to take him away in the midſt of his days, *Pſal.* cii. 24. and in *Pſal.* lv. 23. he tells us, that " bloody and " deceitful men ſhall not live out half " their days." Now, one would reaſonably conclude from hence, that God has not abſolutely and unconditionally determined the fatal period of every man's life, becauſe he has conditionally promiſed to prolong mens lives, or threatened to

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ſhorten them: for what place can there be for conditional promiſes, where an abſolute decree is paſt? how can any man be ſaid not to live out half his days, if he lives as long as God has decreed he ſhall live? For if the period of every particular man's life be determined by God, none are his days but what God has decreed for him.

As for matter of fact, it is plain and evident, both that men ſhorten their own lives, and that God ſhortens them for them, and that in ſuch a manner as will not admit of an abſolute and unconditional decree. Thus ſome men deſtroy a healthful and vigorous conſtitution of body by intemperance and luſt, and do as manifeſtly kill themſelves as thoſe who hang, or poiſon, or drown themſelves; and both theſe ſorts of men, I ſuppoſe, may be ſaid to ſhorten their own lives; and ſo do thoſe who rob, or murder, or commit any other villainy, which forfeits their lives to public juſtice; or quarrel, and fall in a duel, and the like. And yet you will no more ſay, that God decreed and determined the death of theſe men, than he did their ſin.

Thus God himſelf very often ſhortens the lives of men by plague, and famine, and ſword, and ſuch other judgments as

he executes upon a wicked world; and this muſt be confeſſed to be the effect of God's council and decrees, as a judge decrees and pronounces the death of a malefactor: but this is not an abſolute and unconditional decree, but is occaſioned by their ſins and provocations, as all judgments are: they might have lived longer, and eſcaped theſe judgments, had they been virtuous, and obedient to God; for if they ſhould have lived no longer, whether they had ſinned or not, their death, by what judgments ſoever they are cut off, is not ſo properly the execution of juſtice, as of a peremptory decree; their lives are not ſhortened, but their fatal period is come.

Indeed, unleſs we make the providence of God, not the government of a wiſe and free agent, who acts *pro re nata*, and rewards and puniſhes as men deſerve, as the ſcripture repreſents it; but an unavoidable execution of a long ſeries of fatal and neceſſary events, from the beginning to the end of the world, as the Stoics thought; we muſt acknowledge that in the government of free agents, God has reſerved to himſelf a free liberty of lengthening or ſhortening mens lives, as will beſt ſerve the ends of providence. For if we will allow man to be a free agent, and that he is not

under a neceſſity of ſinning, and deſerving to be cut off at ſuch a time, or in ſuch a manner, the application of rewards and puniſhments to him muſt be free alſo, or elſe they may be ill applied; he may be puniſhed when he deſerves to be rewarded; the fatal period of life may fall out at ſuch a time, when he moſt of all deſerves long life, and when the lengthening his life would be a public bleſſing to the world. Fatal and neceſſary events can never be fitted to the government of free agents, no more than you can make a clock which ſhall ſtrike exactly for time any number, when ſuch a man ſpeaks, let him ſpeak when, or name what number he pleaſes. And yet there is nothing of greater moment in the government of the world, than a free power and liberty of lengthening and ſhortening mens lives: for nothing more over-awes mankind, and keeps them more in dependence on God; nothing gives a more ſignal demonſtration of a divine power, or vengeance, or protection; nothing is a greater bleſſing to families or kingdoms, or a greater puniſhment to them, than the life or death of a parent, of a child, of a prince; and therefore it is as neceſſary to reſerve this power to God, as to aſſert a providence. There are two or three places of ſcripture which are urged

urged in favour of the contrary opinion; *Job.* xiv. 5. "Seeing his days are deter-" mined, the number of his months are " with thee; thou haſt appointed his bounds " that he cannot paſs." *Job* vii. 1. "Is " there not an appointed time to men " upon earth? are not his days alſo like " the days of an hireling?" Which refer not to the particular period of every man's life, but, as I obſerved before, to the general period of human life, which is fixed and determined, which is therefore called the days or the years of man, becauſe God has appointed this the ordinary time of man's life; as when God threatens that the wicked ſhall not live out half their days, that is, half that time which is allotted for men to live on earth: for they have no other intereſt in theſe days, but that they are the days of a man, and therefore might be their days too.

From what I have now diſcourſed, there are two things very plainly to be obſerved; 1. That men may contribute very much to the lengthening or ſhortening their own lives. 2. That the providence of God does peculiarly over-rule and determine this matter.

1. As for the firſt, we have no need to prove it; for we ſee men deſtroy their own lives every day, either by intem-

perance and luſt, or more open violence; by forfeiting their lives to public juſtice, or by provoking the divine vengeance: and therefore whoever deſires a long life, to fill up the number of his days which God has allotted us in this world, muſt keep himſelf from ſuch deſtructive vices, muſt practiſe the moſt healthful virtues, muſt make God his friend, and engage his providence for his defence. Can any thing be more abſurd than to hear men promiſe themſelves long life, and reckon upon forty or fifty years to come, when they run into thoſe exceſſes which will make a quick and ſpeedy end of them; which will either inflame and corrupt their blood, and let a fever or a dropſy into their brains, or bring rottenneſs in their bones, or engage them in ſome fatal quarrel, or ruin their eſtates, and ſend them to ſeek their fortune upon the road, which commonly brings them to the gallows? What a fatal cheat is this which men put upon themſelves, eſpecially when they ſin in hope of time to repent, and commit ſuch ſins as will give no time to repent in!

The advice of the Pſalmiſt is much better; "What man is he that deſireth life, "and loveth many days, that he may ſee "good? keep thy tongue from evil, and "thy lips from ſpeaking guile: depart

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" from evil, and do good, ſeek peace, and " purſue it." Theſe are natural and moral cauſes of a long life: but that is not all; " for the eyes of the Lord are upon " the righteous, and his ears are open un- " to their cry; the face of the Lord is " againſt them that do evil, to cut off the " remembrance of them from the earth." That is, God will prolong the lives of good men, and cut off the wicked. Not that this is a general rule without exception, but it is the ordinary method of providence. *Pſal.* xxxiv. 12, 13, *&c.*

2. For though God has not determined how long every man ſhall live, by an abſolute and unconditional decree; yet if a ſparrow does not fall to the ground without our Father, much leſs does man. No man can go out of this world, no more than he can come into it, but by a ſpecial providence; no man can deſtroy himſelf but by God's leave; no diſeaſe can kill, but when God pleaſes; no mortal accident can befal us, but by God's appointment, who is therefore ſaid to deliver the man into the hands of his neighbour, who is killed by an evil accident, *Deut.* xix. 4. 5. Theſe waſting judgments of plague and peſtilence, famine and ſword, are appointed by God, and have their particular commiſſions where to ſtrike, as we may ſee,

Lev. xxvi. 47. *Jer.* vi. 7. *Iſa.* lxv. 12. *Jer.* xv. 2. *Pſal.* xci. and ſeveral other places. All the rage and fury of men cannot take away our lives, but by God's particular permiſſion, *Mat.* x. 28, 29, 30, 31.

And this lays as great an obligation on us as the love of life can, which is the deareſt thing in this world, to ſerve and pleaſe God: this will make us ſecure from all fears and dangers; "My times," ſaith David, "are in thy hand; deliver "me from the hand of mine enemies, "and from them that perſecute me," *Pſal.* xxxi. 15. This encourages us to pray to God for ourſelves or our friends, whatever danger our lives are in, either from ſickneſs or from men. There is no caſe wherein he cannot help us; when he ſees fit, he can rectify the diſorders of nature, and correct an ill habit of body, and rebuke the moſt raging diſtemper, which mocks all the arts of phyſic, and powers of drugs; and many times does ſo by inſenſible methods. To conclude, this is a great ſatisfaction to good men, that our lives are in the hands of God; that tho' there be not ſuch a fixed and immoveable period ſet to them, yet death cannot come but by God's appointment.

SECT.

SECT. VI.

The particular time when we are to die is unknown and uncertain to us.

3. THE particular time when any of us are to die is unknown and uncertain to us: and that is what we properly call the uncertainty of our lives, that we know not when we ſhall die, whether this night, or to-morrow, or twenty years hence. There is no need to prove this, but only to mind you of it, and to acquaint you what wiſe uſe you are to make of it.

1. This ſhews how unreaſonable it is to flatter ourſelves with the hope of long life; I mean, of prolonging our lives near the utmoſt term and period of human life, which, though it be but ſhort in itſelf, is yet the longeſt that any man can hope to live. No wiſe man will promiſe himſelf that which he can have no reaſon to expect, but what has often failed others: for let us ſeriouſly conſider what reaſon any of us have to expect a long life; is it becauſe we are young, and healthful, and vigorous? and do we not daily ſee young men die? can youth, or beauty, or ſtrength ſecure us from the arreſts of death? Is it becauſe we ſee ſome

men

men live to a great age? But this was no ſecurity to thoſe who died young, and left a great many men behind them, who had lived twice or thrice their age; and therefore we may alſo ſee a great many old men, and die young ourſelves. It is poſſible we may live to old age, becauſe ſome do; but it is more likely we ſhall not, becauſe there are more that die young. The truth is, the time of dying is ſo uncertain, the ways of dying ſo infinite, ſo unſeen, ſo caſual and fortuitous to us, that inſtead of promiſing ourſelves long life, no wiſe man will promiſe himſelf a week, nor venture any thing of great moment and conſequence upon it. The hope of long life is nothing elſe but ſelf-flattery: the fondneſs men have for life, and that partiality they have for themſelves, purſuades them that they ſhall live as long as any man can live, and ſhall eſcape theſe diſeaſes and fatal accidents with which our bills of mortality are filled every week: but then you ſhould conſider, that other men are as dear to themſelves as you are, and flatter themſelves as much with long life as you do: but their hopes very often deceive them, and ſo may yours.

But you will ſay, to what purpoſe is all this? why ſo much pains to put us out of conceit with the hopes of living long? for what hurt is it if we flatter ourſelves a little more

more in this matter, than we have reaſon for? if it ſhould prove only a deceitful dream, yet it makes life chearful and comfortable, and give us a true reliſh of it; and why ſhould we diſturb ourſelves and make life uneaſy, by the perpetual thoughts of dying?

Now, I confeſs, were there no hurt and danger in it, this were as ill-natured and ſpiteful a thing as could be done; and the leaſt recompence I could make would be to aſk you pardon for it, and leave you to enjoy the comforts of life ſecurely for the future, to live on as long as you can, and let death come when it will without being looked for. But I apprehend a great deal of danger in ſuch deceitful and flattering hopes, and that is the reaſon why I diſſuade you from it: for,

1. The hope of long life is apt to make us fond of this world, which is as great a miſchief to us as to expoſe us to all the temptations and flatteries of it. That we muſt die and leave this world, is a good reaſon indeed why we ought not to be fond of it; why we ſhould live like pilgrims or ſtrangers here, as I obſerved before: but few men who hope to live threeſcore or fourſcore years, think much of this: though it be comparatively ſhort in reſpect of eternity, yet it is a great while to live, and a great

while

while to enjoy this world in; and that is thought a very valuable happineſs which can be enjoyed ſo long. And then men let looſe their deſires and affections, endeavour to get as much of this world as they can, and to enjoy as much of it as they can; and not only to taſte, but to take full and plentiful draughts of the intoxicating pleaſures of it. And how dangerous this is, I need not tell any man, who conſiders, that all the wickedneſs of mankind is owing to too great a fondneſs and paſſion for this world.

And therefore, if we would live like pilgrims, and ſit looſe from all the enjoyments of this world, we muſt remember that our ſtay is uncertain here, that we have no leaſe of our lives, but may be turned out of our earthly tenements at pleaſure. For what man would be fond of laying up great treaſures on earth, who remembers that this night his ſoul may be taken from him; and then whoſe ſhall all theſe things be? what man would place his happineſs in ſuch enjoyments, which, for ought he knows, he may be taken from to-morrow! Theſe are indeed melancholy and mortifying conſiderations; and that is the true uſe of them; for it is neceſſary we ſhould be mortified to this world, to cure the love of it, and conquer its temptations; "for if

"any

" any man love the world, the love of the
" Father is not in him: for all that is in
" the world, the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt
" of the eye, and the pride of life, is not
" of the Father, but of the world."

2. As the hopes of long life give great advantages to the temptations of this world, ſo they weaken the hopes and fears of the other world; they ſtrengthen our temptations, and weakens us; which muſt needs be of very fatal conſequence to us in our ſpiritual welfare. All that we have to oppoſe againſt the flattering temptations of this world are the hopes and fears of the world to come; but the hope of long life ſets the next world at too great a diſtance to conquer this: what is preſent works more powerfully upon our minds than what is abſent; and the farther any thing is off, the leſs powerful it is.

To make you ſenſible of this, I ſhall only deſire you to remember what thoughts you have had of another world, when the preſent fears of dying have given you a nearer view of it. Good Lord! what agonies have I ſeen dying ſinners in! how penitent, how devout, how reſolved upon a new courſe of life! which too often vaniſh like a dream, when the fear of death is over. What is the reaſon of this difference? heaven and hell is the very ſame

when

when we are in health, as when we are ſick; and I will ſuppoſe that you do as firmly believe a heaven and a hell in health as in ſickneſs. The only thing then that makes the thoughts of the other world ſo ſtrong and powerful, and affecting when we are ſick, is, that we ſee the other world near us, that we are juſt a-ſtepping into it, and this makes it our preſent concernment; but in health we ſee the other world a great way off, and therefore do not think it of ſuch near and preſent concernment: and what we do not think ourſelves at preſent concerned in, or not much concerned in, how great and valuable ſoever it be in itſelf, will either not affect us at all, or very little. Thus, while bad men place the other world at a great diſtance from them, and out of ſight, they have no reſtraint at all upon their luſts and paſſions; and good men themſelves, at the greater diſtance they ſee the other world, are ſo much the leſs affected by it, which damps their zeal and their devotion, and makes them leſs active and vigorous in doing good.

And there is ſo much the more danger in this, becauſe men look upon the other world as fartheſt off, and ſo are leaſt concerned about it, when the thoughts of the other world are moſt uſeful and moſt ne-

ceſſary to them. In the heat and vigour of youth, men are moſt expoſed to the temptations of fleſh and ſenſe, and have moſt need to think of another world, and a future judgment: but thoſe who promiſe themſelves a long life, ſee death and another world ſo far off, while they are young, that it moves them as little as if there were no other world.

And though one would think, that as our lives waſte, and as the other world grows near, ſo we ſhould recover a more lively ſenſe of it; yet we find it quite otherwiſe. When men have been uſed to think the next world a great way off, they will never think it near till it comes; and when they have been uſed to think of the other world without any paſſion or concernment for it, it is almoſt an impoſſible thing to give any quickneſs and paſſion to ſuch thoughts: for when any thoughts, and the paſſions that properly belong to ſuch thoughts, have been a great while ſeparated, it is a hard thing to unite them again; to begin to think of that with paſſion and concern, which we have been uſed for thirty or forty years to think of without any concernment.

3. Another dangerous effect of flattering ourſelves with long life, is that it encourages men to ſin, with the vain hopes

and resolutions of repenting before they die. When men are convinced that if they live and die in sin they must be miserable for ever; as I believe most professed Christians are, as I am sure all must be who believe the gospel of our Saviour; there is no other possible way to ward off this blow, and to sin securely under such convictions, but by resolving to repent, and to make their peace with God before they die: they flatter themselves they have a great while yet to live, judgment is a great way off, and therefore they may indulge themselves a while, and enjoy the sweets of sin, and gratify their youthful inclinations, and learn the vanity of the world by experience, as their forefathers have done before them; and then they will grow as wise and grave, and declaim against the follies and vanities of youth, and be as penitent, and as devout and religious, as any of them all.

Whoever considers the uncertainty of human life, if he should hear men talk at this rate, would either conclude that they were mad, or merrily disposed; but could never guess that they were in their wits, and in good earnest too: but if we allow men to be in their wits, who can promise themselves long life, when they see every day how uncertain life is (and if we will not

not allow ſuch men to be in their wits, above two thirds of the world are mad); this gives a plain account how men may reſolve to ſin while they are young, and to repent when they are old: for it is only the flattering hopes of a long life that can encourage men in a courſe of ſin. Men, indeed, who do not promiſe themſelves long life, may commit a particular ſin, and reſolve to repent of it, as ſoon as they have done, which are a more modeſt ſort of ſinners; of which more preſently: but I ſpeak now of thoſe (and too many ſuch there are) who reſolve to take their fill of this world, while youth and ſtrength, and health laſt, and to grow ſober and religious when they grow old; the conſequence of which is, that they reſolve to be damned, unleſs they live till they are old, or till they grow weary of their ſins, and learn more wiſdom by age and experience.

Now, I ſhall not inſiſt at preſent upon the hazard ſuch men run of not living till the time comes which they allotted for their repentance, which belongs to another argument; but only, what a dangerous thing it is to be tempted to a cuſtom and habit of ſinning, by the hope of long life, and of time enough to repent in; for there is not a greater cheat in the world

that men put upon themſelves than to indulge themſelves in all manner of wickedneſs, to contract ſtrong and powerful habits of vice, with a reſolution to repent of their ſins, and to forſake them, before they die.

The experience of the world ſufficiently proves how vain this is; for though ſome ſuch men may live till they are old, how ſeldom is it ſeen that they repent of their youthful debaucheries when they grow old! they ſtill retain their love and affection for thoſe ſins which they can commit no longer; and repent of nothing, but that they are grown old, and cannot be ſo wicked as they were when they were young.

And is there any reaſon in the world to expect it ſhould be otherwiſe? do we not know what the power of habit and cuſtom is? how the love of ſin increaſes with the repeated commiſſion of it? And is the ſpending our youthful ſtrength and vigour in ſin likely to diſpoſe and prepare us to be ſincere penitents when we grow old? do we not ſee that a cuſtom of ſinning in ſome men deſtroys a modeſty of human nature; in others, all ſenſe of God, and of religion, or of the natural differences of good and evil? Some men ſin on till they deſpiſe repentance, others till

till they think repentance is too late: ſo that though men were ſure that they ſhould live long enough to grow wiſer, and to repent and reform the ſins and extravagancies of youth; yet no man who enters upon a wicked courſe of life has any reaſon to expect that he ſhall ever repent: and therefore it is extremely dangerous to flatter ourſelves into a habit and cuſtom of ſinning, with the hopes and expectations that we ſhall live to repent of our ſins: and if this be dangerous, it muſt be very dangerous to flatter ourſelves with the hopes of long life, which is the great temptation to men to ſin on, and to delay their repentance till old age.

2. Since the time of our death is ſo unknown and uncertain to us, we ought always to live in expectation of it; to be ſo far from promiſing ourſelves long life, that we ſhould not promiſe ourſelves a day: and the reaſon for it is plain and neceſſary, becauſe we are not ſure of a day.

This, you will ſay, is hard indeed, to live always in expectation of dying, which is no better than dying every day, or enduring the repeated fears and terrors of death every day, which is the moſt uncomfortable part of dying: at this rate we never live, but inſtead of dying once, as

God has appointed, we are always a-dying; nay, this indeed is a fine ſaying, but ſignifies nothing, for no man does it, nor can do it: though we may die every day, we ſee that men live on forty, fifty, threeſcore years; and therefore tho' we know that our lives are uncertain, yet no man can think every day that he ſhall die to-day.

This is very true, and therefore to live always in expectation of dying does not ſignify a belief that we ſhall die to-day, but only that we may; which anſwers the objections againſt the uncomfortableneſs of it: for ſuch an expectation as this has nothing of dread and terror in it, but only prudence and caution. Men may live very comfortably, and enjoy all the innocent pleaſures of life, with theſe thoughts about them: to expect death every day, is like expecting thieves every night, which does not diſturb our reſt, but only make us lock and bar our doors, and provide for our own defence. Thus to expect death is not to live under the perpetual fears of dying, but to live as a wiſe man would do, who knows not that he muſt, but that he may die to-day.

That is, to be always prepared for death; not to defer our repentance and return to God for one moment; not to commit any

any wilful ſin, leſt death ſhould ſurpriſe us in it; not to be ſlothful and negligent, but to be always employed in our Maſter's buſineſs, according to our Saviour's counſel, *Luke* xii. 35, *&c.* "Let your loins "be girded about, and your lamps burn- "ing, and ye yourſelves like unto men "that wait for their Lord, when he will "return from the wedding, that when he "cometh and knocketh, they may open "unto him immediately. Bleſſed are thoſe "ſervants whom the Lordwhen he cometh "ſhall find watching. And this know, "that if the goodman of the houſe had "known at what hour the thief would "come, he would have watched, and "not ſuffered his houſe to be broken "through. Be ye therefore ready alſo; "for the ſon of man cometh at an hour "when ye think not." This our Saviour alſo warns us of in the parable of the wiſe and fooliſh virgins, *Matth.* xxv. While the bridegroom tarried they all ſlept; but the wiſe virgins preſently aroſe, and trimmed their lamps, and went in with him to the marriage, and the door was ſhut: the fooliſh virgins had no oil, and their lamps were gone out; and while they went to buy oil, they were ſhut out, and could afterwards procure no admiſſion. "Watch "therefore, for ye know neither the day

"nor

" nor the hour when the ſon of man " cometh."

This is the danger of a ſudden death, and the reaſon why our church prays againſt it; for were we always in a preparation to die, with our lamps trimmed and burning, like virgins who expect the bridegroom, to die then without notice, without fear and apprehenſion, without the melancholy ſolemnities of dying, were a true ἐυθανασία, the moſt deſirable way of dying. But the danger of a ſudden death is, that men are ſurpriſed in their ſins, and hurried away to judgment, before their accounts are ready; that they are ſnatched out of this world, before they have made any proviſion for the next. And the only way to prevent this is to be always upon our watch, always in expectation of death, and always prepared for it.

Some men think themſelves very ſafe, if after an age of ſin and vanity, they have but ſo much notice of death, as to aſk God's pardon upon a ſick-bed, to confeſs and bewail the wickedneſs of their paſt lives, to die in horrors and agonies of mind, which they call repentance, but indeed are nothing elſe but the ſad preſages of an awakened conſcience, diſtracted with its own guilt, and the terrible expectations

of

of vengeance. But though this be a very comfortleſs way of dying, and, I fear, generally very hopeleſs too; yet no man can promiſe himſelf ſo much as this, who does not live in a conſtant expectation of death. We may be cut off by a ſudden ſtroke, or ſeized with diſtraction or ſtupidneſs, ſo that if only aſking God pardon before we die would ſave our ſouls, we could not do it. And this is the caſe of ſo many ſinners, that it ſhould be a warning to all: men who know not when, or how, or in what manner they muſt die, ought to be ready prepared againſt all accidents and ſurpriſing events.

3. Since the time of our death is ſo very uncertain, it concerns us to improve our preſent time; becauſe no time is ours but what is preſent. I obſerved before, that the ſhortneſs of our lives, though we were to live to the utmoſt extent of them, threeſcore and ten, or fourſcore years, was a ſufficient reaſon to loſe none of our time, but to improve it to the beſt and wiſeſt purpoſes: and the ſureſt way to loſe none of our time, is to improve the preſent time; and there is a plain neceſſary reaſon why we ſhould do that, becauſe our lives are uncertain, and therefore no time is ours but what is preſent. The time paſt was ours; but that is gone, and we

can

can never recal it, nor live it over again; if we have ſpent it well, we ſhall find it ours ſtill in our account, but it is no longer our time to live and act in: the time to come may be ours, and may not; becauſe we know not whether we ſhall live to it, and therefore we cannot reckon upon it: the time preſent is ours, and that is the only time that is ours; and therefore if we will improve our time, we muſt improve our preſent time, we muſt live to-day, and not put off living till to-morrow.

All mankind are ſenſible of the neceſſity and prudence of this in all other matters excepting the concernment of their ſouls. An Epicurean ſenſualiſt is for the preſent gratification of his luſts; *Vivi hodie*, is his motto; "Let us eat and drink, for to-"morrow we die." Men who are intent upon increaſing riches, and advancing their fortune and honours, are for taking the preſent time and opportunity to do it. Indeed, ſetting aſide the conſideration of the uncertainty of our lives, there are ſome things which a wiſe man will not delay, or put off to another time, when he has opportunity to do it at preſent.

What is neceſſary to be done, he will do as ſoon as he can, the very firſt moment that it becomes neceſſary, if opportunity ſerves.

What

What is neceſſary every day, he will not put off from one day to another, but will do it every day; as eating, and drinking, and ſleeping are.

What he reſolves to do, and may as well do at preſent, and is as fit to be done at preſent as at any other time, he will do at preſent.

What may ſuffer by delays, he will do the firſt time he can do it.

What is proper for ſome peculiar times and ſeaſons, he will do when thoſe times and ſeaſons come, as the huſbandman obſerves the ſeaſons for ſowing and reaping; the tradeſman his markets and fairs.

What is of preſent uſe and convenience to him, what he takes great pleaſure in, or what he mightily longs for and deſires, he will by no means delay, but is for doing it at preſent.

Now all theſe are very weighty reaſons why we ſhould take care of our ſouls, repent of our ſins, live in the practice of all Chriſtian graces and virtues, and do all the good we can at preſent; but much more, when we conſider that our lives are ſo uncertain, that we may have no other time to do any thing of this in, but what is preſent.

For, (1.) Is any thing of more abſolute neceſſity than the ſalvation of our ſouls?

This

This is that one thing needful; the ſalvation of our ſouls is needful, as a neceſſary end; and the practice of true religion needful, as ſubſervient to that end. If to eſcape eternal miſery, and to obtain eternal happineſs be not neceſſary, I know not what can make any thing neceſſary. And if this cannot be done without the knowledge and practice of true religion, that is as neceſſary as the ſalvation of our ſouls is: and can any preſent time, how early ſoever it be, be too ſoon to do that which is neceſſary to be done; eſpecially when we are not ſure of any other time to do it in? No time is too ſoon to do that which is abſolutely neceſſary; and no wiſe man will neglect doing that at preſent, which unleſs it be done, he muſt be miſerable for ever; and yet it may never be done, if it be not done at preſent.

(2.) Is not religion, and the care of our ſouls, the work of every day, as much as eating and drinking to preſerve our bodily health and ſtrength is? muſt we not pray to God every day, and make his laws the rule of our actions every day, and repent of our ſins, and do what good we can every day? And what is the work of every day, we ought to do every day, though we were ſecure of living till to-morrow, much more

we know that we may die before another day come.

(3.) Do ye not all reſolve to repent of your ſins, and reform your lives, before ye die? and is it not as neceſſary to repent of your ſins to-day as ever it will be? is not to-day as proper a time to repent in as ever you are likely to have? are ye ſure of having another day to repent in, if ye neglect this? This may convince any conſidering man, that no reſolutions of repenting hereafter can be ſincere; becauſe ſuch men reſolve indeed to repent, but do not reſolve to do it at ſuch a time, when they can do it, that is, the preſent time, which alone they are ſure of; but put it off till another time, which may never be theirs.

I grant, men may ſincerely reſolve to do that hereafter, a month, or half a year, or a year hence, which they do not find ſo fitting and convenient to do at preſent: but then this is not an abſolute reſolution to do ſuch a thing, but a conditional reſolution, that they will do it, if they live till ſuch a time, when it will be convenient to be done.

Conſider then which of theſe you mean when you reſolve to repent: is it only a conditional reſolution, that you will repent, if you live till ſuch a time? I grant there is ſome ſenſe in this reſolution; but I wiſh you would conſider what danger there is

in it too: for are you contented to be eternally miſerable if you do not live till your time of repentance comes? No; this you tremble at the thoughts of, and reſolve to repent, becauſe you reſolve not to be miſerable for ever: that is, you abſolutely reſolve to repent, you are convinced this is abſolutely neceſſary; it is a work that muſt be done, and you are reſolved to do it. Conſider then, how vain and contradictory this reſolution is, to reſolve to repent hereafter; which is an abſolute reſolution, with a condition annexed to it, and a very uncertain one too; a reſolution certainly to repent, but not in a certain but uncertain time. And yet thoſe who repent, muſt repent in ſome time; and repentance can never be certain, when the time to repent in is uncertain. Indeed no reſolution is good, which is not for the preſent time, when there are no exceptions againſt doing it at preſent, eſpecially when there is ſuch manifeſt danger in deferring it. To reſolve to repent hereafter, when the preſent time is the only certain time to repent in, only ſignifies that men are convinced of the neceſſity of repentance, but love their ſins ſo well, that they cannot part with them yet; and therefore, that they may ſin on ſecurely, without the perpetual fears and terrors of another world, they reſolve to repent

pent hereafter. Now, though there were no ſuch manifeſt danger in a delay, from the uncertainty of our lives, yet let any man judge whether ſuch reſolutions as theſe are ever like to take effect; a reſolution which is owing to a great love to ſin, and is intended only to ſilence mens guilty fears, and give a preſent ſecurity in ſinning. For this reaſon, they reſolve not to repent now, but to repent hereafter; and if they keep this reſolution, they will never repent; for hereafter will never come, which does not ſignify any ſet and determined time, but any time which is not preſent. The reaſon why they reſolve not to repent to-day, will extend to every day when it comes; that is, that they love their ſins, and are unwilling to part with them: and the reaſon why they reſolve to repent hereafter will ſerve for all hereafters, but will never ſerve for any time preſent; *viz.* becauſe they will not repent yet, and yet will flatter themſelves into ſecurity with vain hopes of repentance. Flatter not yourſelves then with vain hope; he who reſolves to repent, but does not reſolve to repent preſently, though he knows he is ſure of no other time but the preſent to repent in, does not ſincerely reſolve to repent, but only reſolves to delay his repentance.

The like may be ſaid concerning the

danger of delays, concerning miſſing the proper times and ſeaſons of action, and neglecting that which is of preſent uſe to us, and which we ought above all things to deſire, *viz.* to ſecure the happineſs of our immortal ſouls: but I ſhall only add this one thing to make you ſenſible what it is to let ſlip the preſent time, without improving it to any wiſe purpoſes; that he who loſes his preſent time, loſes all the time he has, all the time that he can call his own; which is the ſum of all other arguments; that the preſent time is the only time he has to live in, to repent in, to ſerve God, and to do good to men in, to improve his knowledge, and to exrciſe his graces, and to prepare himſelf for a bleſſed immortality; which are the moſt neceſſary, the moſt uſeful, the moſt deſirable things in the world, and that which gives the value to time itſelf, which is valuable only for the ſake of what may be done, and what may be enjoyed in it.

But you will ſay, at this rate we muſt ſpend our whole lives in the duties of religion, in thinking on God and another world, in acts of repentance and mortification, in prayer and faſting, and ſuch like exerciſes of devotion: here will be no time left for the ordinary affairs of life, ſcarce to eat, or drink, or ſleep in; but that they will have ſome of our time whether we will

will or no: but here is no allowance made for recreations and diverſions, for the converſation of friends, and innocent mirth and paſtime, to refreſh our wearied bodies and minds; for if we muſt be careful to improve the preſent time to the beſt purpoſes, our preſent time is our whole time, for we have no time but what is preſent; and as one minute ſucceeds another, ſtill we muſt improve it to the beſt purpoſes; that is, we can do but one thing all our lives; and the beſt way then would be to turn hermits, and ſequeſter ourſelves from the world and human converſation.

The anſwers to this objection will teach us what it is to improve our preſent time, and how it muſt be done.

Now, *1ſt*, I allow the objection ſo far, that if a man have miſ-ſpent great part of his life, have contracted great guilt, and powerful habits of vice; the chief, and almoſt the only thing ſuch a man can do, is to bewail his ſins before God, and with earneſt and repeated importunities to beg his pardon; to live in a ſtate of penance and mortification; to deny himſelf the pleaſures and comforts of life, till he has in ſome meaſure ſubdued his love of ſin, and regained the command and government of his paſſions, and has recovered the peace of his mind, and ſome good hopes

that God has forgiven him, and received him into favour, for the ſake of Chriſt. Thus he ought to do; and when he is made thoroughly ſenſible of his ſins, and the danger he is in, he can do no otherwiſe. While he is terrified with the fears of hell, he has little ſtomach to the neceſſary affairs and buſineſs of life, much leſs to the mirth and pleaſures of it. But this is ſuch an interruption to the ordinary and regular courſe of life as a fit of ſickneſs is, which confines us to our bed, or to our chamber, and makes us incapable of minding any thing but the recovery of our health: and when this is the caſe, then indeed the care of our ſouls is the only neceſſary buſineſs, and the only employment of our time.

2*dly*, But when this is not the caſe, the wiſe improvement of our preſent time does not confine us always to be upon our knees, or doing ſomething which has a direct and immediate aſpect upon God and another world; for the ſtate of this world will not admit of that: but he employs his time well, who divides it among all the affairs and offices of life, between this world and the next, and employs the ſeveral portions of his time in things fit and proper for ſuch a ſeaſon; who begins and ends the day with adoring his Maker and

Redeemer,

Redeemer, bleſſing him for all his mercies both temporal and ſpiritual, begging the pardon of all his ſins, the protection of his providence, the aſſiſtance of his grace: and then minds his ſecular affairs with juſtice and righteouſneſs, eats and drinks with ſobriety and temperance, does all good offices for men, as occaſion ſerves, and, if he have any ſpare time, improves it for the increaſe of his knowledge, by reading and meditating on the ſcriptures or other uſeful books; or refreſhes himſelf with the innocent and chearful converſation of his friends, or ſuch other diverſions as are not ſo much a loſs and expence of time, as a neceſſary relaxation of the mind, to recruit our ſpirits, and to make us more fit either for buſineſs or devotion. But then, on days ſet apart for the more public and ſolemn acts of worſhip, religion is his chief employment; for that is the proper work of the day, to worſhip God, and to examine the ſtate of his own ſoul; to learn his duty more perfectly, and to affect his mind with ſuch a powerful ſenſe of God and another world, as may arm him againſt all temptations when he returns to the world again. This is to improve our preſent time well, to obſerve the proper times and ſeaſons of action, and to do what is fit and proper for ſuch ſeaſons;

ſons; never to do any thing which is evil; and as for the ſeveral kinds of good actions, to do what particular times and ſeaſons require. Thus we may give a good account of our whole time, even of our moſt looſe vacant hours; which it becomes us to do, though we were certain to live many years, but does more nearly concern us when our time is ſo uncertain.

4. Since our lives are ſo very uncertain, this ought to cure an anxious care and ſolicitude for times to come. We may live many years, though our lives are uncertain, and therefore a provident care becomes us; but we may die alſo very quickly, and why then ſhould we diſturb ourſelves with to-morrow's cares, much leſs with ſome remoter poſſibilities? Haſt thou at any time an ill proſpect before thee of private or public calamities? do the ſtorms gather? are the clouds black and lowering, and charged with thunder, and ready to break over thy head? Shelter thyſelf as well as thou canſt, make all prudent proviſion for a ſtorm, becauſe thou mayeſt live to ſee it: but be not too much diſmayed and terrified with a ſtorm at a diſtance; for thy head may be laid low enough, and out of its reach, before it breaks; and then all this trouble and perplexity is in vain. Many ſuch examples have I ſeen; of men diſturbed

diſturbed with ill preſages of what was coming; which, beſides that thoſe things did not happen which they expected, or were not ſo black and diſmal as their affrighted fancy painted them, if they had come, they were very ſafe firſt, and got out of their way.

I do not intend by this to comfort men againſt foreſeen evils, that they may die before they come, which is a ſmall comfort to moſt men, when, it may be, death is the moſt formidable thing in the evils they fear: but ſince our lives are uncertain, and we may die, and never ſee the evils we fear, it is unreaſonable to be as much diſtracted with them as if they were preſent and certain. The uncertainty of future events, is one reaſon why we ought not to be anxious and ſolicitous about them; and the uncertainty of our lives is another: and what is very uncertain ought not to be the object of any great concern or paſſion.

5. For the ſame reaſon we ought not to be greatly afraid of men, nor to put our truſt and confidence in them, becauſe their lives are very uncertain; they may not be able to hurt us, when we are moſt apprehenſive of danger from them; nor to help us, when we need them moſt. This is the pſalmiſt's argument, *Pſal.* cxlvi. 3, 4.

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" Put not your truſt in princes, nor in the " ſon of man, in whom there is no help: " his breath goeth forth, he returneth to " his earth; in that very day his thoughts " periſh." *Iſa.* ii. 22. " Ceaſe ye from " man, whoſe breath is in his noſtrils, " for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Men, eſpecially great and powerful men, may do us a great deal of hurt, and may do us a great deal of good; and therefore common prudence will teach us, by all wiſe and honeſt arts, to gain their favour, and to avoid all unreaſonable and needleſs provocations: but yet, at beſt, they are ſuch brittle creatures, that they can be the objects only of a ſubordinate fear or hope. When the fear of man comes in competition with the fear of God, it is wiſe counſel which the prophet Iſaiah gives; " Say ye not, a confede- " racy, to all them to whom this people " ſhall ſay, a confederacy; neither fear " ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify " the Lord God of hoſts himſelf, and let " him be your fear, and let him be your " dread; and he ſhall be for a ſanctua- " ry," *Iſa.* viii. 12, 13, 14. There is a vaſt difference between the power of God and men; which is our Saviour's reaſon why we ſhould fear God more than men; " Be not afraid of them who can kill the " body,

" body, and after that they have no more " that they can do: but I will forewarn " you whom you ſhall fear; fear him, " which after he hath killed, hath power " to caſt into hell; yea, I ſay unto you, " fear him," *Luke.* xii. 4, 5. But whatever power men may have to hurt while they live, they can do us no hurt when they are dead; and their lives are ſo very uncertain, that they may be quickly eaſed of thoſe fears. The ſame may be ſaid with reſpect to hope and confidence in men; though their word and promiſe were always ſacred, yet their lives are uncertain; " their breath goeth forth, they return " to the earth; in that very day their " thoughts periſh;" all the good and all the evil they intended to do: but " happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for " his help, whoſe hope is in the Lord his " God, which made heaven and earth, " the ſea, and all that therein is, who " keepeth truth for ever," *Pſal.* cxlvi. 5, 6.

6. For a concluſion of this argument, I ſhall briefly vindicate the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, in concealing from us the time of our death. This we are very apt to complain of, that our lives are ſo very uncertain, that we know not to-day but that we may die to-morrow; and we would be mighty glad to meet with any

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one who could certainly inform us in this matter, how long we are to live: but if we think a little better of it, we ſhall be of another mind.

For, *1ſt*, Though I preſume many of you would be glad to know that you ſhall certainly live twenty, or thirty, or forty years longer; yet would it be any comfort to know, that you muſt die to-morrow, or ſome few months, or a year or two hence? which may be your caſe, for ought you know: and this, I believe, you are not very deſirous to know; for how would this chill your blood and ſpirits? how would it overcaſt all the pleaſures and comforts of life? you would ſpend your days like men under the ſentence of death, while the execution is ſuſpended.

Did all men who muſt die young certainly know it, it would deſtroy the induſtry and improvements of half mankind, which would half deſtroy the world, or be an unſupportable miſchief to human ſocieties; for what man, who knows that he muſt die at twenty, or five and twenty, a little ſooner or later, would trouble himſelf with ingenious or gainful arts, or concern himſelf any more with this world, than juſt to live ſo long in it? and yet how neceſſary is the ſervice of ſuch men in the world? what great things do they

many times do? and what great improvements do they make? how pleaſant and diverting is their converſation, while it is innocent? how do they enjoy themſelves, and give life and ſpirit to the graver age? how thin would our ſchools, our ſhops, our univerſities, and all places of education be, did they know how little time many of them were to live in the world? for would ſuch men concern themſelves to learn the arts of living, who muſt die as ſoon as they have learned them? would any father be at a great expence in edu ating his child, only that he might die with a little Latin and Greek, logic and philoſophy? No; half the world muſt be divided into cloiſters and nunneries, and nurſeries for the grave.

Well, you will ſay, ſuppoſe that; and is not this an advantage above all the inconveniencies you can think of, to ſecure the ſalvation of ſo many thouſands who are now eternally ruined by youthful luſts and vanities, but would ſpend their days in piety and devotion, and make the next world their only care, if they knew how little while they were to live here?

Right. I grant this might be a good way to correct the heat and extravagancies of youth; and ſo it would be to ſhew them heaven and hell: but God does not think

fit to do either, becauſe it offers too much force and violence to mens minds; it is no trial of their virtue, of their reverence for God, of their conqueſts and victory over this world, by the power of faith; but makes religion a matter of neceſſity, not of choice. Now God will force and drive no man to heaven; the goſpel diſpenſation is the trial and diſcipline of ingenuous ſpirits; and if the certain hopes and fears of another world, and the uncertainty of our living here, will not conquer theſe flattering temptations, and make men ſeriouſly religious, as thoſe who muſt certainly die, and go into another world, and they know not how ſoon; God will not try whether the certain knowledge of the time of their death will make them religious. That they may die young, and that thouſands did ſo, is reaſon enough to engage young men to expect death, and prepare for it; if they will venture, they muſt take their chance, and not ſay they had no warning of dying, if they eternally miſcarry by their wilful delays.

And beſides this, God expects our youthful ſervice and obedience, though we were to live on till old age. That we may die young, is not the proper, much leſs the only reaſon why we ſhould remember our Creator in the days of our youth; but becauſe

becauſe God has a right to our youthful ſtrength and vigour; and if this will not oblige us to an early piety, we muſt not expect that God will ſet death in our view, to fright and terrify us; as if the only deſign God had in requiring our obedience, was not that we might live like reaſonable creatures to the glory of their Maker and Redeemer, but that we might repent of our ſins time enough to eſcape hell. God is ſo merciful as to accept of returning prodigals, but does not think fit to encourage us in ſin, by giving us notice when we ſhall die, and when it is time to think of repentance.

2*dly*, Though I doubt not but that it would be a great pleaſure to you to know that you ſhould live till old age, yet conſider a little with yourſelves, and then tell me, whether you yourſelves can judge it wiſe and fitting for God to let you know this?

I obſerved to you before, what danger there is in flattering ourſelves with the hopes of long life; that it is apt to make us too fond of this world, when we expect to live ſo long in it; that it weakens the hopes and fears of the next world, by removing it at too great a diſtance from us; that it encourages men to live in ſin, becauſe they have time enough before them

to indulge their luſts, and to repent of their ſins, and make their peace with God, before they die. And if the uncertain hopes of this undoes ſo many men, what would the certain knowledge of it do? Thoſe who are too wiſe and conſiderate to be impoſed upon by ſuch uncertain hopes, might be conquered by the certain knowledge of a long life.

This would take off all reſtraints from men, and give free ſcope to their vicious inclinations, when they knew, that, how wicked ſoever they were, they ſhould not die before their time was come, and could never be ſurpriſed by death, ſince they certainly knew when it would come; which deſtroys one great motive to obedience, that ſin ſhall ſhorten mens lives, and that virtue and piety ſhall prolong them; that "the wicked ſhall not live half their "days;" that "the fear of the Lord "prolongeth days, but the years of the "wicked ſhall be ſhortened," *Prov.* x. 27. Such promiſes and threatenings as theſe muſt be ſtruck out of the Bible, ſhould God let men know the time of their death.

Nay, this would fruſtrate the methods and deſigns of providence for the reclaiming ſinners. Sometimes public calamities, plague, and famine, and ſword, alarm a wicked world, and ſummon men to repentance;

pentance; ſometimes a dangerous fit of ſickneſs awakens men into a ſenſe of their ſins, and works in them a true and laſting repentance; but all this would be ineffectual, did men know the time of their death, and that ſuch public judgments, or threatening ſickneſs ſhould not kill them.

The uncertainty of our lives is a great motive to a conſtant watchfulneſs, to an early and preſevering piety; but to know when we ſhall die, could ſerve no good end, but would increaſe the wickedneſs of mankind, which is too great already; which is a ſufficient vindication of the wiſdom of God, in leaving the time of death unknown and uncertain to us.

SECT. VII.

That we muſt die but once; or that death tranſlates us to an unchangeable ſtate: with the improvement of it.

THE laſt thing to be conſidered is, That we muſt die but once; *It is appointed for men once to die.* There are ſome exceptions from this rule, as there are from dying; that as Enoch and Elias did not die, ſo ſome have been raiſed again from the dead, to live in this world; and ſuch men died twice. But this is a cer-

tain rule in general, that as all men muſt die once, ſo they muſt die but once; which needs no other proof but the daily experience and obſervation of mankind.

But that which I intended by it is this, that once dying determines our ſtate and condition for ever. When we put off theſe mortal bodies, we muſt not return into them again, to act over a new part in this world, and to correct the errors and miſcarriages of our former lives; death tranſlates us to an immutable and unchangeable ſtate; ſo that, in this ſenſe, what the wiſe man tells us is true; "If the tree fall to-"wards the ſouth, or towards the north, "in the place where the tree falleth, "there it ſhall be, *Eccleſ.* xi. 3. This is a conſideration of very great moment, and deſerves to be more particularly explained, which I ſhall do in theſe following propoſitions.

1. That this life is the only ſtate of trial and probation for eternity: and therefore, 2. Death, whenever it comes, as it puts a final period to this life, that we die once for all, and muſt never live again, as we do now in this world; ſo it puts a final end to our work too, that our day of grace, and time of working for another world, ends with this life. And, 3. As a neceſſary conſequence of both theſe, once dying

dying puts us into an immutable and unchangeable ſtate.

1. That this life is only our ſtate of trial and probation for eternity: whatever is to be done by us to obtain the favour of God, and a bleſſed immortality, muſt be done in this life.

I obſerved before, that this life is wholly in order to the next; that the great, the only neceſſary buſineſs we have to do in this world, is to fit and prepare ourſelves to live for ever in God's preſence; "to finiſh the work God has given us to "do," that we may receive the reward of good and faithful ſervants, to enter into our maſter's reſt: I now add, That the only time we have to do this in, is while we live in this world. This is evident from what St Paul tells us, that "we "muſt all appear before the judgment-"ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may re-"ceive the things done in his body, ac-"cording to what he hath done, whether "it be good or bad," 2 *Cor.* v. 10. Now, if we muſt be judged, and receive our final ſentance, according to what we have done in the body, then our only time of trial and working is while we live in theſe bodies; for the judgment refers only to what is done in the body.

The goſpel of Chriſt is the rule whereby

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we muſt be judged, even that goſpel which St Paul preached, *Rom.* ii. 16. And all the laws and precepts of the goſpel concern the government of our converſation in this world; and therefore, if we be judged by the goſpel, we muſt be judged only for what we have done in this world.

This life, throughout the ſcripture, is repreſented as the time of working, as a race, a warfare, a labouring in the vineyard; the other world as a place of recompenſe, of rewards or puniſhments. And if there be ſuch a relation between this world and the next, as between fighting and conquering, and receiving the crown, as between running a race and obtaining a prize, as between the work and the reward; then we muſt fight and conquer, run our race and finiſh our work in this world, if we expect the reward of the next.

Many of thoſe graces and virtues which our Saviour has promiſed to reward with eternal life, can be exerciſed only in this world; faith and hope are peculiar only to this life, while the other world is abſent and unſeen: and theſe are the great principles and graces of the Chriſtian life, to believe what we do not ſee, and to live and act upon the hopes of future rewards. The government of our bodily appetites and paſſions by the rules of temperance, ſobriety

briety and chaſtity, neceſſarily ſuppoſes that we have bodies and bodily appetites and paſſions to govern: and therefore theſe virtues can be exerciſed only while we live in theſe bodies, which ſolicit and tempt us to ſenſual exceſſes. To live above this world, to deſpiſe the tempting glories of it, is a virtue only while we live in it, and are tempted by it: to have our converſation in heaven, which is the moſt divine temper of mind, is a goſpel-grace only while we live in this world, at a great diſtance from heaven: to be contented in all conditions, to truſt God in the greateſt dangers, to ſuffer patiently for righteouſneſs ſake, *&c.* I need not tell you, are virtues proper only for this world; for there can be no exerciſe for them in heaven, unleſs we can think it a virtue to be patient and contented with the happineſs and glory of that bleſſed place.

Thus moſt of the ſins which the goſpel forbids under the penalty of eternal damnation, can be committed by us only in this world, and in theſe bodies; ſuch as fornication, adultery, uncleanneſs, rioting, drunkenneſs, injuſtice, murder, theft, oppreſſion of the poor and fatherleſs, earthly pride and ambition, covetouſneſs, a fond idolatry of this world, diſobedience to parents and governors, *&c.* Now, if theſe be

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the things for which men ſhall be ſaved or damned, it is certain that men muſt be ſaved or damned only for what they do in this life.

Bad men, who are fond of this world, and of bodily pleaſures, which make them impatient of the ſevere reſtraints of religion, complain very much of this that their eternal happineſs or miſery depends upon ſuch a ſhort and uncertain life; that they muſt ſpend this life under the awe and terror of the next; that ſome few momentary pleaſures muſt be puniſhed with endleſs miſery; and that if they out-ſlip their time of repentance, if they venture to ſin on too long, or die a little too ſoon, there is no remedy for them for ever.

But let bad men look to this, and conſider the folly of their choice. I am ſure, how hard ſoever it may be thought to be eternally damned for the ſhort pleaſures of ſin, no man can reaſonably think it a hard condition of eternal ſalvation to ſpend a ſhort life in the ſervice of God. And if we will allow, that God may juſtly require our ſervices and obedience for ſo great a reward as heaven is; where can we do him this ſervice but on earth? If a corrupt nature muſt be cleanſed and purified, If an earthly nature muſt be ſpiritualized and refined, before it can be fit to live in heaven; where

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can this be done but on earth, whilſt we live in theſe bodies of fleſh, and are encompaſſed with ſenſible objects? This is the time for a divine ſoul, which aſpires after immortality, to raiſe itſelf above the body, to conquer this preſent world, by the belief and hope of unſeen things; to awaken and exerciſe its ſpiritual powers and faculties, and to adorn itſelf with thoſe virtues and graces which come down from heaven, and, by the mercies of God, and the merits of our Saviour, will carry us up thither. There is no middle ſtate between living in this body and out of it; and therefore whatever habits and diſpoſitions of mind are neceſſary to make a ſpirit happy, when it goes out of this body, muſt be formed and exerciſed while it is in it: earth and heaven are two extremes, and oppoſite ſtates of life; and therefore it is impoſſible immediately to paſs from one to the other. A ſoul which is wholly ſenſualized by living in the body, if it be turned out of the body without any change, cannot aſcend into heaven, which is a ſtate of perfect purity; for in all reaſon the place and ſtate of life muſt be fitted to the nature of things: and therefore, a life of holineſs, while we live in theſe bodies, is a kind of middle ſtate between earth and heaven; ſuch a man belongs to both worlds; he is united

to this world by his body, which is made of earth, and feels the impreſſion of ſenſible objects, but his heart and affections are in heaven; by faith he contemplates thoſe inviſible glories, and feels and reliſhes the pleaſures of a heavenly life. And he who has his converſation in heaven, while he lives in this body, is ready prepared and fitted to aſcend thither, when he goes out of it; he paſſes from earth to heaven thro' the middle region (if I may ſo ſpeak) of a holy and divine life.

Beſides this, it was neceſſary to the happineſs and good government of this preſent world, that future rewards or puniſhments ſhould have relation to the good or evil which we do in this life. This, in many caſes, lays reſtaints upon the luſts and paſſions of men, when the rods and axes of princes cannot reach them; it overawes them with inviſible terrors, and makes a guilty conſcience its own judge and tormentor; it ſours all the pleaſures of ſin, ſtuffs the adulterer's pillow with thorns, and mingles gall and wormwood with the drunkard's cups: it governs thoſe who are under no other government, whoſe boundleſs and uncontroulable power gives them opportunity of doing what miſchief they pleaſe, and gives them impunity in doing it. But the moſt lawleſs tyrants, who fear

no other power, yet feel the inviſible reſtraints of conſcience, and thoſe ſecret and ſevere rebukes, which make them tremble. Nay, many times, the fear of the other world governs thoſe whom no preſent evil or puniſhment can govern: men who would venture whatever they could ſuffer in this life by their ſins, are yet afraid of hell, and dare not venture that: thoſe who would venture being ſick after a debauch, who would venture to ſacrifice their bodies, their eſtates, their reputation, in the ſervice of their luſts; who are contented to take their fortune at the gallows, or at the whipping-poſt, yet dare not venture lakes of fire and brimſtone, the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never goeth out.

Thus, on the other hand, how much is it for the preſent happineſs of the world that men ſhould live in the practice of thoſe Chriſtian graces and virtues which no human laws command, and the neglect of which no human laws can puniſh? As, to inſtance only in the love of enemies, and forgiveneſs of injuries, and ſuch an univerſal charity, as does all the good it can to all men; I need not prove, that the exerciſe of theſe virtues is for the good of the world, or that no human laws require

the exerciſe of them, in ſuch noble meaſures and degrees as the goſpel does.

The laws of the land allow ſcope enough to ſatisfy the moſt revengeable man, who will uſe all the extremities, and the vexatious arts of proſecution, unleſs nothing will ſatisfy his revenge but blood and a ſpeedy execution: for the laws ought to puniſh thoſe injuries which a good Chriſtian ought to forgive; and then ſome men may be undone by legal revenge, and others damned for taking it. If no man ſhould do any good offices for others, but what the law commands, there would be very little good done in the world; for laws are principally intended for the preſervation of juſtice; but the acts of a generous and bountiful charity are free; and men may be as charitable as the law requires, without any degree of that divine charity which will carry them to heaven. Nothing but the hopes and fears of the next world can enforce theſe duties on us. And this juſtifies the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, in making the preſent exerciſe of theſe virtues neceſſary to our future rewards. I ſhall only add, that whatever complaints bad men may make, that their future happineſs or miſery depends upon the government and conduct of their lives in this world, I am ſure all mankind

mankind would have had great reaſon to complain if it had been otherwiſe; for how miſerable muſt it have made us to have certainly known that we muſt be eternally happy or eternally miſerable in the next world, and not to have as certainly known how to eſcape the miſeries and obtain the happineſs of it? and how could that be poſſibly known, if the trial of it had been reſerved for an unknown ſtate? what a terrible thing had it been to die, could no man have been ſure what would have become of him in the next world? as no man could have been, upon this ſuppoſal: for how can any man know what his reward ſhall be, when he is ſo far from having done his work, that he knows not what he is to do, till he comes into the next world?

But now, ſince we ſhall be rewarded according to what we have done in this body, every man certainly knows what will make him happy or miſerable in the next world; and it is his own fault, if he do not live ſo as to ſecure immortal life. And what a bleſſed ſtate is this, to have ſo joyful a proſpect beyond the grave, and put off theſe bodies with the certain hopes of a glorious reſurrection! This, I think, is ſufficient to vindicate the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, in making this preſent

life a ſtate of trial and probation for the happineſs of the next. But to proceed:

2. If this life be only our ſtate of trial and probation for eternity; then death, as it puts a final period to this life, ſo it puts a final end to our work too; our day of grace, and time of working for another world, ends with this life.

We ſhall eaſily apprehend the neceſſity of this, if we remember that death, which is the puniſhment of ſin, is not merely the death of the body, but that ſtate of miſery to which death tranſlates ſinners: and therefore, if we die while we are in a ſtate of ſin, under the curſe and under the power of death, there is no redemption for us; becauſe the juſtice of God has already ſeized us, the ſentence is already executed, and that is too late to obtain a pardon. For in this caſe death anſwers to our caſting into priſon, from whence we ſhall never come forth till we have paid the uttermoſt farthing, as our Saviour repreſents it, *Mat.* v. 25, 26. for indeed ſin is the death of the ſoul; and thoſe who are under the power of ſin, are in a ſtate of death; and if they die before they have a principle of new life in them, they fall under the power of death, that is, into a ſtate of miſery and puniſhment which is appointed for ſuch dead ſouls.

And

And therefore our redemption from death by Chriſt, is begun in our dying to ſin, and walking in newneſs of life, which is our conformity to the death, and the reſurrection of Chriſt, *Rom.* vi. 4. This is to be dead to ſin, and to be alive to God, as Chriſt is: and if we die with Chriſt, we ſhall riſe with him alſo into immortal life, which is begun in this world, and will be perfected in the next; which is the ſum of St Paul's argument, ver. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. Thus he tells us, *Rom.* viii. 10, 11. "If "Chriſt be in you, the body is dead be- "cauſe of ſin, but the ſpirit is life becauſe "of righteouſneſs;" that is, our bodies are mortal, and muſt die, by an irreverſible ſentence which God pronounced againſt Adam when he had ſinned; but the ſoul and ſpirit has a new principle of life, a principle of righteouſneſs and holineſs, by which it lives to God, and therefore cannot fall into a ſtate of death when the body dies; "But if the Spirit of him "that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead, ſhall "alſo quicken your mortal bodies, by his "Spirit that dwelleth in you;" that is, when the Divine Spirit has quickened our ſouls, and raiſed them into a new life, though our bodies muſt die, yet the ſame Divine Spirit will raiſe them up alſo into immortal life.

This is the plain account of the matter; if death arreſts us while we are in a ſtate of ſin and death, we muſt die for ever; but if our ſouls are alive to God, by a principle of grace and holineſs, before our bodies die, they muſt live for ever. A dead ſoul muſt die with its body; that is, ſink into a ſtate of miſery, which is the death and the loſs of the ſoul: a living ſoul ſurvives the body in a ſtate of bliſs and happineſs, and ſhall receive its body again, glorious and immortal, at the reſurrection of the juſt. But this change of ſtate muſt be made while we live in theſe bodies; a dead ſoul cannot revive in the other world, nor a living ſoul die there; and therefore this life is the day of God's grace and patience, the next world is the place of judgment. And the reaſon St Peter gives why God is not haſty in executing judgment, but is long-ſuffering to us-ward, is becauſe he is "not willing that any ſhould periſh, "but that all ſhould come to repen-"tance," 2 *Pet.* iii. 9. Hence the apoſtle to the Hebrews exhorts them, "Where-"fore, as the holy Ghoſt ſaith, To-day, "if ye will hear his voice, harden not "your hearts, as in the provocation, in "the day of temptation in the wilderneſs; "when your fathers tempted me, proved "me, and ſaw my work forty years. "Wherefore

" Wherefore I was grieved with that ge-
" neration, and ſaid, They do always err
" in their hearts, and they have not
" known my ways. So I ſware in my
" wrath, They ſhall not enter in my reſt."
Heb. iii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

There is ſome diſpute what is meant by *to-day*, whether it be the day of this life, or ſuch a fixed and determined day and ſeaſon of grace as may end long before this life. The example of the Iſraelites, of whom God did ſwear in his wrath, that they ſhould die in the wilderneſs, and never enter into his reſt, that is, into the land of Canaan, ſeems to incline to the latter ſenſe; for this ſentence, that they ſhould not enter into his reſt, was pronounced againſt them long before they died; for which reaſon they wandered forty years in the wilderneſs, till all that generation of men were dead. And if we are concerned in this example, then we alſo may provoke God to ſuch a degree, that he may pronounce the final ſentence on us, that we ſhould never enter into heaven, long before we leave this world. Our day of grace may have a ſhorter period than our lives, and we may wander about in this world, as the Iſraelites did in the wilderneſs, under an irreverſible doom and ſentence. And the ſcope of the apoſtle's argument

gument ſeems to require this ſenſe, which is to engage them to a ſpeedy repentance; "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden "not your hearts." But why to-day? is it becauſe our lives are uncertain, and we may die before to-morrow? No; but leſt we provoke God to ſwear in his wrath that we ſhall not enter into his reſt.

All men know, that if they die in a ſtate of ſin, they muſt be miſerable for ever; and this is a reaſon to repent before they die. But the apoſtle ſeems to argue further, That by their delays and repeated provocations they may tempt God to ſhorten their day of grace, and pronounce an irrevocable ſentence on them, which leaves no place for repentance: which elſewhere he enforces from the example of Eſau, who ſold his birthright, *Heb.* xii. 15, 16, 17. "Looking diligently, leſt any man fail of "the grace of God; leſt any root of bit-"terneſs, ſpringing up, trouble you, and "thereby many be defiled; leſt there be "any fornicator, or profane perſon, as "Eſau, who for one morſel ſold his birth-"right. For ye know how that afterwards "when he would have inherited the bleſ-"ſing, he was rejected; for he found no "place for repentance, tho' he ſought it "carefully with tears."

The ſtating of this matter may be thought a digreſſion

a digreſſion from my preſent deſign, but indeed it is not; for if by to-day be meant the whole time of this life, that proves, that death puts a final period to our day of grace; and if any ſhorter period than this life be meant by it, it proves it much ſtronger: for if our ſentence be paſſed before we die, it will not be revoked after death. But the ſtating this queſtion is a matter of ſo great conſequence to us, that, if it were a digreſſion, it were very pardonable; for many devout minds, when they are diſturbed and clouded with melancholy, are afflicted with ſuch thoughts as theſe, that their day of grace is paſt, that God has ſworn in his wrath, that they ſhall not enter into his reſt: and therefore their repentance and tears will be as fruitleſs as Eſau's were, which could not obtain the bleſſing

Now, for reſolving this queſtion, I ſhall ſay theſe three things: (1.) That the day of grace, according to the terms of the goſpel, is commenſurate with our lives. (2.) That, notwithſtanding this, men may ſhorten their own day of grace, and God may, in wrath and juſtice, confirm the ſentence. (3.) That the reaſons for lengthening the day of grace, together with our lives, do not extend to the other world,

and

and therefore death muſt put a final period to it.

(1.) That the day of grace, according to the terms of the goſpel, is commenſurate with our lives. And there needs no other proof of this, but that the promiſe of pardon and forgiveneſs is made to all true penitents, without any limitation of time. Whoever believes in Chriſt, and repents of his ſins, he ſhall be ſaved. This is the doctrine of the goſpel; and if this be true, then it is certain, that at what time ſoever a ſinner ſincerely repenteth of his ſins, he ſhall be ſaved; for otherwiſe ſome true and ſincere penitents, if they repent too late, after the day of grace is expired, ſhall be damned; and then it is not true that all ſincere penitents ſhall be ſaved.

I know but one objection againſt that, from the example of Eſau, who having ſold his birthright, "when afterwards he "would have inherited the bleſſing, was "rejected: for he found no place for re-"pentance, though he ſought it carefully "with tears." It ſeems then that Eſau repented too late, and ſo may we; his repentance could not be accepted. And if we are concerned in this example, as the apoſtle intimates we are, then we may repent of our ſins when it is too late, and loſe the bleſſing, as Eſau did.

But

But this objection is founded on a miſtake of Eſau's caſe: the repentance here mentioned is not Eſau's repentance, but Iſaac's: that is, when Iſaac had bleſſed Jacob, Eſau with all his tears and importunity could not make him recal it; *i. e.* Iſaac would not repent of the bleſſing he had given to Jacob; "I have bleſſed him, "yea, and he ſhall be bleſſed." *Gen.* xxvii. 33.

Eſau's caſe then was not that his repentance came too late to be accepted, but that he could not obtain the bleſſing, after he had ſold his birth-right, to which the bleſſing was annexed. Now, to apply this to the ſtate of Chriſtians; that which anſwers to Eſau's birth-right, is their right and title to future glory, being made the ſons of God by baptiſmal regeneration, and faith in Chriſt; to ſell this birth-right, is to part with our hopes of heaven for the pleaſures, or riches, or honours of this world, as Eſau ſold his birth-right for one morſel of meat; that is, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, "to "fail of the grace of God," either thro' unbelief, which he calls the root of bitterneſs, a renouncing the faith of Chriſt, and returning to Judaiſm or Pagan idolatries, or by an impure and wicked life; "leſt "there be any fornicator, or prophane "perſon, as Eſau, who for one morſel of "meat

" meat ſold his birth-right;" *i. e.* who deſpiſe the hopes of heaven for the ſinful pleaſures and enjoyments of this world: men who thus fail of the grace of God, and finally do ſo, as Eſau finally ſold his birth-right, when our heavenly Father comes to give us his bleſſing, thoſe great rewards he has promiſed in his goſpel, how importunate ſoever they ſhall then be for a bleſſing, as Eſau was, who ſought it carefully with tears, they ſhall find no place for repentance; God will not alter his purpoſes and decrees for their ſakes. Our Saviour has given us a plain comment on this, *Matt.* vii. 21, 22, 23. " Not every " one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall " enter into the kingdom of heaven; but " he that doth the will of my Father which " is in heaven. Many will ſay unto me at " that day," that is, the day of judgment, when the bleſſing is to be given, " Lord, " Lord, have we not propheſied in thy " name, and in thy name caſt out devils, " and in thy name done many wonderful " works?" Here is Eſau's importunity for the bleſſing. " And then I will profeſs " unto them, I never knew you: depart " from me, ye that work iniquity." They were profane Eſaus, who had ſold their birth-right for a morſel of meat, and now they found no place for repentance; our

Lord will not be perſuaded by all their importunities to alter his ſentence, but "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

This example then of Eſau does not concern our preſent caſe; it does not prove that a wicked man, who hath ſpent the greateſt part of his life in ſin and folly, ſhall not be accepted and rewarded by God, if he ſincerely repent of his ſins, and reform his life: but it only proves that a wicked and ungodly Chriſtian, who prefers the pleaſures and enjoyments of this world before the hopes of heaven, and defiles the ſoul with impure and worldly luſts, what pretences ſoever he may make to the bleſſing, or how importunate ſoever he may be for it, ſhall receive no bleſſing from God; that is, that "without holineſs no "man ſhall ſee God;" which is the very thing the apoſtle intended to prove by this example, as you may ſee, ver. 14.

I grant the caſe is different as to churches and nations; ſometimes their day of grace is fixed and determined, beyond which, without repentance, they ſhall no longer enjoy the light of the goſpel. Thus the appearance of Chriſt in the fleſh, and his preaching the goſpel to them, was the laſt trial of Jeruſalem, and determined the fate of that beloved city: and therefore when Chriſt rode into Jeruſalem, in order to his

cruciſixion, " when he was come near, he " beheld the city, and wept over it, ſaying, " If thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt " in this thy day, the things which belong " unto thy peace! but now they are hid " from thine eyes. For the days ſhall " come upon thee, that thine enemies ſhall " caſt a trench about thee, and compaſs " thee round, and keep thee in on every " ſide, and ſhall lay thee even with the " ground, and thy children within thee; " and they ſhall not leave in thee one ſtone " upon another: becauſe thou kneweſt " not the time of thy viſitation," *Luke* xix. 41, *&c.* And this our Saviour warned them of before, *John* xii. 35, 36. " Yet a little " while and the light is with you; walk " ye while ye have the light, leſt darkneſs " come upon you: for he that walketh in " darkneſs knoweth not whither he goeth. " While ye have light, believe in the light, " that ye may be the children of the light." Which ſignifies, that unleſs they believed on him while he was with them they muſt be utterly deſtroyed; " the kingdom of " God ſhould be taken from them, and " given to a nation bringing forth the " fruits thereof;" as he proves by the parable of the houſeholder who planted a vineyard, *Matt.* xii. 33, &c.

And this was in ſome meaſure the caſe of

of the ſeven churches of Aſia, to whom St John directed his epiſtle, to ſummon them to repentance, and threaten them with the removal of the candleſtick, if they did not repent. The judgments of God in the overthrow of ſome flouriſhing churches, and in tranſplanting the goſpel from one nation to another, are very myſterious and unſearchable: but as for particular perſons who enjoy the light of the goſpel, unleſs they ſhorten their day of grace themſelves, God does not ſhorten it; as long as they live in this world, they are capable of grace and mercy, if they truly repent.

(2.) Men may ſhorten their own day of grace; not by ſhortening the time of grace and mercy, for that laſts as long as this life does; but by out-living the poſſibility of repentance; and when they are paſt repentance, their day of grace is at an end; and this may be much ſhorter than their lives: that is, men may ſo harden themſelves in ſin, as to make their repentance morally impoſſible; and God, in his juſt and righteous judgments, may give up ſuch men to a ſtate of hardneſs and impenitence.

Every degree of love to ſin proportionably enſlaves men to the practice of it, makes repentance as uneaſy and difficult as it is to "pluck out a right eye, and cut "off a right hand," *Matt.* v. 29, 30. as

painful as dying, as "crucifying the fleſh, "with its affections and luſts," which few men will ſubmit to, *Rom.* viii. 13. *Col.* iii. 5.

An habit and cuſtom of ſin turns into nature, and is as difficultly altered as nature is: "Can the Æthiopian change his "ſkin, or the leopard his ſpots? then "may you alſo do good, who are accu-"ſtomed to do evil," *Jer.* xiii. 23.

Some ſins are of ſuch a hardening nature, that few men who are once entangled by them can ever break the ſnare; ſuch as adultery, or the love of ſtrange women, of whom Solomon tells us, "Her houſe in-"clineth unto death, and her paths unto "the dead: none that go unto her return "again, neither take they hold of the paths "of life *," *Prov.* ii. 18, 19.

Covetouſneſs is ſuch another hardening ſin, that our Saviour tells us, "It is eaſier "for a camel to go through the eye of a "needle, than for a rich man to enter in-"to heaven;" thoſe who love and thoſe who truſt in their riches, *Matt.* xiii. 23, 24, 25.

Thoſe who have been once enlightened, and fall back again into infidelity; who have been inſtructed in the reaſons of faith, and the motives of obedience; who have had

* See Prov. v. 23. and vi. 22, 23, 27, 28.

had the heavenly ſeed of God's word ſown in their hearts, but have not brought forth the fruits of it; are near the curſe of barren ground, which drinketh in the dews and rain of heaven, "and brings forth "briars and thorns which is rejected, and "is nigh unto curſing, whoſe end is to "be burnt," *Heb.* vi. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

When men obſtinately reſiſt the perpetual motions and ſolicitations of the Holy Spirit, he withdraws from them, and gives them up to their own counſels, as we leave off perſuading thoſe who will not be perſuaded.

And when the Spirit of God forſakes ſuch men, the evil ſpirit ſeizeth them, that ſpirit which ruleth in the children of diſobedience, *Eph.* ii. 3. For the world is divided into the kingdom of darkneſs and the kingdom of light, *Col.* i. 13. and thoſe who are not under the government of the Divine Spirit, "are led captive by "the devil at his will," 2 *Tim.* ii. 6. and therefore our Saviour hath taught us to pray to be delivered from evil, απο του πονηρου, from the evil one, that is, from the devil; for that is a hopeleſs ſtate, when God gives us up to the government of evil ſpirits: nay, when men harden themſelves in ſin, they are rejected by the good providence of God, which ſecures good men from, or

delivers them out of temptations, as our Saviour taught us to pray, "Lead us not "into temptation;" as a father keeps a watchful eye over a dutiful child, to preſerve him from any harm, and to chuſe the moſt proper condition and circumſtances of life for him, but ſuffers a prodigal to go where he pleaſes, and undo himſelf as faſt as he can. And whoever conſiders the weakneſs and folly of human nature, and the power of temptations, muſt needs conclude that man given up to ruin, who is rejected by the good ſpirit of God, and caſt out of the care of his providence.

Into this miſerable ſtate men may bring themſelves by ſin, which, though it does not make them uncapable of mercy, if they do repent, yet it makes it morally impoſſible that they ſhould repent. It is this the apoſtle to the Hebrews warns againſt, from the example of the hardneſs and infidelity of the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs, of whom God ſware, that they ſhould not enter into his reſt; as appears from the applications he himſelf makes of it, *Heb.* iii. 12, 13. "Take heed, brethren, "leſt there be in any of you an evil heart "of unbelief, in departing from the living "God: but exhort one another daily, while "it

" it is called to-day, leſt any of you be har-
" dened thro' the deceitfulneſs of ſin."

This is a plain account of that great queſtion concerning the length of the day of grace. Men may out-live the time of repentance, may ſo harden themſelves in ſin, as to make their repentance morally impoſſible, but they cannot out-live the mercies of God to true penitents. This is reaſon enough to diſcourage men from delaying their repentance, and indulging themſelves in a vicious courſe of life, " leſt they " ſhould be hardened by the deceitfulneſs " of ſin," and ſhould be forſaken by God: but it is no reaſon to diſcourage true penitents from truſting in the mercy of God, how late ſoever their repentance be: for while we live in this world, the door of grace and mercy is not ſhut againſt true penitents.

(3.) But yet the reaſons for lengthening the day of grace and mercy do not reach beyond this life. This ſufficiently appears from what I have already ſaid; and for a further confirmation of it, I ſhall only add but this one comprehenſive reaſon, *viz.* That the grace of the goſpel is confined to the church; and therefore this life is the only time to obtain the remiſſion of our ſins, and a title to future glory. We ſhall be finally abſolved from all other ſins,

and

and rewarded with eternal life at the day of judgment; but we muſt ſue out our pardon, and make our calling and election ſure in this world.

The goſpel of Chriſt, which is the goſpel of grace, and contains the promiſes of pardon and immortal life, is preached only to men on earth, and concerns none elſe.

For this reaſon Chriſt became man, clothed with fleſh and blood as we are, that he might be the Saviour of mankind; which he need not have done, had not their ſalvation been to be wrought in this world: for could they have been ſaved in the next, his grace might have met them ſoon enough there. And therefore at the birth of our Saviour the angels ſang, "Glory be to God in the higheſt, on "earth peace, good-will towards men," *Luke*. ii. 14.

The ſacrifice of Chriſt upon the croſs (as all Jewiſh ſacrifices, which were types of the ſacrifice of the croſs, were), was offered for the expiation of the ſins of living men, or at leaſt conſidered as living, not of the dead.

He carried his blood into heaven, (as the high-prieſt did the blood of the ſacrifice into the holy of holies) there to make expiation, and to intercede for us: but this

this interceſſion, though made in heaven, relates only to men on earth, as his ſacrifice did. The earthly tabernacle was a type of the church on earth; and that only, and the worſhippers in it, were expiated by ſacrifices.

There are two ſacraments whereby the grace of the goſpel is applied to us, and which are the ordinary means of our ſalvation, Baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper; and they are confined to the church on earth; and if they have not their effect here, they cannot have it in the next world. Theſe unite us to Chriſt, as members of his body; and then the Holy Spirit, which animates the body of Chriſt, takes poſſeſſion of us, renews and ſanctifies us; but if we prove dead and barren branches in this ſpiritual vine, if the cenſures of the church do not cut us off from the body of Chriſt, death will; and then we can never be re-united to him, nor ſaved by him in the next world. Faith in Chriſt, and repentance from dead works, are the great goſpel terms of pardon and ſalvation; and theſe are confined to this world: there may be ſomething like them in the next world; ſuch a faith as makes the devils tremble, ſuch repentance as is nothing elſe but deſpairing agonies, and a hopeleſs and tormenting remorſe: but ſuch a faith as purifieth

purifieth the heart, as conquers this preſent world, and brings forth the fruits of righteouſneſs; ſuch a repentance, as reforms our lives, as undoes all our paſt ſins, as redreſſes the injuries we have done to our neighbours, and the ſcandal we have given to the world; ſuch a faith, and ſuch a repentance, which alone are the true Chriſtian graces of faith and repentance, are proper only for this life, and can be exerciſed only in this life, while we have this world to conquer, and the fleſh to ſubdue to the ſpirit, while we can reſtore our ill-gotten riches, and ſet a viſible example of piety and virtue.

From hence it is very evident, that no man who dies in a ſtate of ſin and impenitence can be ſaved by Chriſt, and by the grace of the goſpel, in the world; for the whole miniſtration of goſpel-grace is confined to this life; and if they cannot be ſaved by Chriſt, I know no other name whereby they can be ſaved; and thus death puts an end to all the flattering hopes of ſinners.

3. Now if this life be our only ſtate of trial and probation for eternity, if death puts a final end to our day of grace and the time of working; then death muſt tranſlate us to an immutable and unchangeable ſtate. By this I do not mean, that as

ſoon

ſoon as we go out of theſe bodies, our ſouls will immediately be as happy or miſerable as ever they ſhall be: the perfect rewards of good men are reſerved for the day of judgement, as the final puniſhments of bad men are; when our Lord "ſhall "ſay to thoſe on his right hand, Come "ye bleſſed of my father, inherit the "kingdom prepared for you from the "foundation of the world: and to them "on the left hand, Go ye curſed into "everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil "and his angels," *Matth.* xxv. 34, 41.

But though the happineſs or miſeries of the next world may increaſe, yet the ſtate can never alter: that is, if we ſhall die in a ſtate of grace and favour with God, we ſhall always continue ſo; if we die in a ſtate of ſin, under the wrath and diſpleaſure of God, there is no altering our ſtate in the other world; we muſt abide under his wrath for ever. This is the neceſſary conſequence of what I have already ſaid, which all aimed at this point, that once dying puts us in an immutable and unchangeable ſtate: and therefore I ſhall wave any further proof of this, and only deſire you ſeriouſly to conſider of it.

(1.) Now, firſt, ſince death puts an end to our day of grace, and determines our final ſtate forever, and this death comes but

but once; all men muſt confeſs of what mighty conſequence it is to die well, that death may find us well diſpoſed and well prepared for another world. Men uſe their utmoſt prudence and caution in doing that which can be done but once for their whole lives, eſpecially if the happineſs of their whole lives depends on it; for no error can be corrected in what is to be done but once; and certainly we have much more reaſon to prepare to die once; which reſtrains us to an immutable ſtate of happineſs or miſery. This ought to be the work and buſineſs of our whole lives, to prepare for death, which comes but once: but that once is for eternity. What unpardonable folly is it for any man to be ſurpriſed by death! to fall into the grave without thinking of it! To commit a miſtake which may be retrieved again, to be guilty of ſome neglect or inadvertency, when the hurt we ſuffer by it may be repaired by future diligence and caution, is much more excuſeable, becauſe it is not ſo fatal and irreparable folly. In this caſe experience may teach wiſdom, and wiſdom is a good purchaſe, though we may pay dear for it: but a wiſe man will uſe great caution in making an experiment, which if it fail, will coſt him his life, becauſe that can never be tried a ſecond time; and

experience is of no uſe in ſuch things as can be done but once.

And this is the caſe of dying: we can die but once; and if we miſcarry that once, we are undone for ever: and what conſidering man would make ſuch dangerous experiments as ſinners do every day, when their ſouls are the price of the experiment? who would try how long death will delay its coming? how long he may ſin on ſafely without thinking of death or judgment? whether death will give him timely notice to repent; or whether God will give him grace to repent, if he does? who would venture the infinite hazards of a death-bed repentance; whether after a long life of ſin and wickedneſs, a few diſtracted, confuſed, and almoſt deſpairing ſighs and groans will carry him to heaven? If ſuch bold adventurers as theſe, when they have diſcovered their miſtake and folly, could return back into this world, and live over their lives again, the hazard were not ſo great: but this is an experiment not to be twice made. If they ſin on till they harden themſelves in ſin, and are forſaken of the grace of God; if death comes long before they expected, and cuts them off by ſurpriſe and without warning; if their dying and deſparing agonies and horrors ſhould not prove a truly godly ſorrow,

not that repentance to ſalvation never to be repented of, they are loſt, to eternity. And what wiſe man would expoſe his ſoul to ſuch hazard as this? who would not take care to make his calling and election ſure before death comes; and in a matter of ſuch infinite concernment, wherein one miſcarriage is irreparable, to prevent danger at a diſtance?

(2.) We hence learn, how neceſſary it is for thoſe who begin well to perſevere unto the end. It is the concluſion of our lives which determines our future ſtate; as God expreſly tells by his prophet Ezekiel, *Ezek.* xviii. 21, 22, 24. "If the wicked will turn from all his ſins that he hath committed, and keep my ſtatutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſurely live, he ſhall not die: all his tranſgreſſions that he hath committed, they ſhall not be mentioned unto him; in his righteouſneſs that he hath done he ſhall live---But when the righteous turneth away from his righteouſneſs, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, ſhall he live? All the righteouſneſs that he hath done ſhall not be mentioned; in his treſpaſs that he hath treſpaſſed, and in his ſin that he hath ſinned, in them ſhall he die."

"die." And throughout the New Teſtament the reward is promiſed only to thoſe who continue to the end. And what I have now diſcourſed gives a plain account of this: for our whole life is a ſtate of trial and probation; and if we leave off before our work be done, if we ſtop or run backwards before we come to the end of our race, we muſt loſe our reward, our crown. The Chriſtian life is a ſtate of warfare, and we know the laſt battle gives the final conqueſt: and this cannot be otherwiſe; becauſe what comes laſt undoes what went before. When a wicked man turns from his wickedneſs, and does good, God, in infinite mercy, through the merits and mediation of Chriſt, will forgive his ſins, becauſe he has put them away from him, and undone them by repentance and a new life. When a righteous man turns from his righteouſneſs, and does wickedly, his righteouſneſs ſhall be forgotten, becauſe he has renounced it, and parted with it, and is a righteous man no longer. Now, when God comes to judge the world, he will judge men as he then finds them; he will not then enquire what they have been, but what they are: he will not condemn a righteons man becauſe he has been wicked, nor juſtify a wicked man becauſe he has been righteous; for this would be to

puniſh the righteous, and to reward the wicked. Such as we are when we die, ſuch we ſhall continue for ever; and therefore it is the laſt ſcene of our lives which determines our future ſtate.

And ſhould not this make us very jealous and watchful over ourſelves? *Heb.* iii. 12. "To take heed leſt there be in any of us "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing "from the living God." *Heb.* xii. 15. "Looking diligently leſt any man fail of "the grace of God; leſt any root of bit-"terneſs ſpringing up, trouble you, and "thereby many be defiled; leſt after we "have eſcaped the pollutions of the world, "through the knowledge of the Lord "and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, we are again "entangled therein, and overcome, and "it happen to us according to the true "proverb, The dog is turned to his vomit "again, and the ſwine that was waſhed "to her wallowing in the mire." This, as the ſame apoſtle tells us, "makes our "latter end worſe than the beginning: for "it had been better for us not to have "known the way of righteouſneſs, than "after we have known it to turn from "the holy commandment delivered to "us." 2 *Pet.* ii. 20, 21, 22.

Let thoſe conſider this who have been bleſſed with a religious education, and trained

trained up in the exerciſes of piety and virtue; who have preſerved themſelves from the pollutions of youthful luſts, and ſpent their vigorous age in the ſervice of God; can you be contented to loſe all thoſe hopeful beginnings, to loſe all your triumphs and victories over the world and the fleſh? when you have outrid all the ſtorms and hurricanes of a tempting world for ſo many years, will you ſuffer yourſelves to be ſhipwrecked in the haven? when you are come within view of the promiſed land, will you ſuffer your hearts to fail you? will you then murmur and rebel againſt God, and die in the wilderneſs?

There has been a very warm diſpute about the perſeverance of ſaints, whether thoſe who are once in a ſtate of grace ſhall always continue ſo? I will not undertake to decide this controverſy; but this much I will ſay, (and that, I think, is all that is needful for a Chriſtian to know about it) that to be in a ſtate of grace, is to have an inward principle of holineſs, which brings forth the fruit of a holy life; then to perſevere in a ſtate of grace, is to preſevere in the practice of holineſs and virtue: that many who have begun well, and have thought themſelves, and have been thought by others, to be truly good men, have afterwards been overcome by the tempta-

tions of the world, and defiled themſelves with the impure luſts of it: that if ſuch men ever were good men, and in a ſtate of grace, they fall from grace when they forſake the paths of holineſs; and that thoſe who do thus fall away, who, after promiſing beginnings, do all the abominations of the wicked, and live and die in ſuch a ſtate, ſhall never enter into heaven. We ſhall receive our final doom and ſentence, according to that ſtate and condition in which death finds us. What is ſaid upon another account, that we muſt call no man happy before death, is true in this ſenſe: no man is a conqueror but he who dies ſo: thoſe men deceive themſelves, who confidently pretend to be ſtill in a ſtate of grace and favour with God, becauſe formerly they were good men, though now they are grown very bad. This is to perſevere in a ſtate of favour with God without perſevering in holineſs; which overthrows the goſpel of our Saviour, and will miſerably deceive thoſe men who have no better foundation for their hopes.

(3.) We hence learn how dangerous it is to die in the actual commiſſion of any known and wilful ſin. Such men go into the other world, and go to judgment with actual guilt upon them: they die in their ſins; for they could not repent of them before

before they died, becauſe they died in the commiſſion of them, and there is no repentance, and therefore no pardon in the next world. This has been, and very often is the miſerable, and, I fear, the hopeleſs ſtate of a great many ſinners. How many are there, who not only drink themſelves into a fever, which takes ſome time to kill them, and gives them ſome time to repent of their ſins, and to aſk God's pardon; but drink themſelves dead, or, which is much at one as to this caſe, drink away their reaſon and ſenſes, and then fall from their horſes, or down a precipice, and periſh by ſome evil accident; or when they are inflamed with wine, forget their old friendſhips, and fall by each other's hands? how many others have periſhed in the very act of adultery, or, which is much the ſame, in quarrelling for a ſtrumpet, in the rage and fury of luſt? how many die in the very act of theft and robbery? All ſuch men receive the preſent puniſhment of their ſins in this world, and carry the unrepented guilt of them into the next; and if men ſhall be damned who die in their ſins without repentance, ſuch mens condition is deſperate. And this may be the caſe of any man who ventures upon a wilful ſin; he may die in the very act of it, and then his repentance will come too late

in

in the next world: and this ſo often happens, that no wiſe man would venture his ſoul upon it.

But there are two ſins eſpecially which this conſideration ſhould deter men from, *viz.* duelling and ſelf-murder.

When men have ſuch a reſentment of affronts and injuries, as to revenge themſelves with their ſwords, and either to thirſt after each other's blood, or at leaſt to ſtake their lives, and to venture killing, or being killed, to decide the quarrel; theſe men have the hearts of murderers, who would kill if they could, or at leaſt would venture killing their brother, to appeaſe their reſentment or revenge, which is a mortal and murdering revenge, whether it murder or not: and therefore if ſuch men fall in the quarrel, as many do, without time to aſk God's pardon with their laſt breath, they die under the guilt of murder unrepented of; though they do not kill, but are killed, yet they die with murderous intentions, with a mortal hatred and revenge; for they would have killed if they could. And St John tells us, "He that "hateth his brother is a murderer, and "we know that no murderer hath eternal "life abiding in him," 1 *John* iii. 15. So that theſe duellers do not only venture their lives, but their ſouls too, if they fall in

in the quarrel; and how little ſoever they value their lives, it is a little too much to pawn their ſouls upon a point of honour.

As for ſelf-murder, if we will allow it to be a ſin, it is certain that no man who commits it can repent of it in this world; and there is no pardon for ſins in the next world, which are not repented of in this. And yet why we ſhould not think it as great a ſin to murder ourſelves, as to murder our brother, I cannot imagine; for it has all the marks of a very great ſin upon it.

It is as much murder to kill ourſelves, as it is to kill another man; and therefore it is a breach of the ſixth commandment, "Thou ſhalt not kill." The reaſon againſt murder is the ſame, "For in the image "of God made he man," *Gen.* ix. 6. and he who kills himſelf deſtroys God's image, as much as he who kills another man. The more unnatural the ſin is, or the greater obligations we have to preſerve the life of the perſons whom we kill, the greater the ſin is. To murder a kind friend, and a benefactor, is a greater evil than to murder a ſtranger; to murder a parent or a child, a wife or a huſband, is ſtill a greater evil, becauſe they are ſo much nearer to ourſelves: and if the nearneſs of the relation encreaſes the ſin, no body is ſo near to us as ourſelves, and

therefore

therefore there is no ſuch unnatural murder as this.

The excuſes which are made for ſelf-murder will not juſtify the murder of any other man in the world. Though we ſhould ſee a friend whom we love like ourſelves labouring under intolerable pains, or inſupportable misfortunes or calamities of life; though he ſhould importune and beſeech us to put an end to his ſuffering, by putting an end to a miſerable life; though out of great kindneſs and compaſſion we heartily deſire to follow him to his grave, yet we muſt not kill him; neither the laws of God nor man will allow this. And yet if ſelf-love be the meaſure of our love to other men, and will juſtify ſelf-murder, when we are grown weary of life, when we either deſpiſe the world, or think it beſt to make our eſcape out of it; I cannot imagine why we may not do the ſame kindneſs for a friend or brother when he deſires, as we may do for ourſelves: the reaſon is the ſame in both; and if it will not juſtify both, it can juſtify neither.

For there is no foundation that I know of for what ſome pretend, that God has given us greater power over our own lives, than over other mens. We find no ſuch power given us in ſcripture, which is the only

only revelation of God's will; and I am ſure nature teaches us no ſuch thing; nay, nature teaches the quite contrary. The natural averſion to death, and the natural principles of ſelf-preſervation, were not only intended to make us cautious of any hurt or miſchief which other men may do us, but to make us careful to do no hurt to, much leſs to deſtroy ourſelves; and therefore the voice of Nature is, that we muſt preſerve our own lives and beings.

When God made us, he did not make us the abſolute lords and maſters of ourſelves; we cannot diſpoſe of ourſelves as we pleaſe, but are his creatures and ſubjects, and muſt receive laws from him; and that in ſuch inſtances wherein the injury is only done to ourſelves. We muſt not abuſe our own bodies by intemperance and luxury, or luſt, though neither the public, or any private perſons are injured by it: and if we have not power over our own bodies in leſſer inſtances, much leſs to kill them.

And if it be a ſin to deſtroy our own lives, it is the moſt mortal and damning ſin, for it deſtroys ſoul and body together, becauſe it makes our repentance impoſſible; unleſs men can repent of their ſin, and obtain God's pardon for it, before they have committed it, or can repent and

obtain

obtain their pardon in the next world. Did men ſeriouſly conſider this, it is impoſſible that the greateſt ſhame and infamy, want or ſuffering, or whatever it is that makes them weary of life, ſhould be thought ſo intolerable, as to make them force their paſſage into the other world to eſcape it, when ſuch a violent und unnatural eſcape will coſt them their ſouls. Men may be in ſuch evil circumſtances as may make death deſirable; but no conſidering man will exchange the ſufferings of this life, for the endleſs miſeries of the next. If we cannot deſtroy our lives, and put an end to our preſent ſufferings, without deſtroying our ſouls too, we muſt be contented to live on, and bear our lot patiently in this world; which, whatever it is, is much more eaſy and tolerable than to be eternally miſerable.

And yet God forbid that I ſhould pronounce a final and peremptory ſentence upon all thoſe unfortunate perſons who have died by their own hands. We know not what allowances God may make for ſome mens opinion of the lawfulneſs of it, and for the diſtraction of other mens thoughts and paſſions, through a ſettled melancholy, or ſome violent temptation. My buſineſs is not to limit the ſovereign and prerogative grace of God, but to de-

clare the nature of the thing, according to the terms of the goſpel. To murder ourſelves, is the moſt unnatural murder; it is a damning ſin, and ſuch as no man can repent of in this world: and therefore, unleſs God forgive it without repentance, it can never be forgiven; and the goſpel of Chriſt gives us no commiſſion to preach forgiveneſs of ſin without repentance. The goſpel-grace, which only forgives penitents, cannot ſave ſuch men; and he is a very bold man, and ventures very far upon unpromiſed and uncovenanted mercy, who will commit a ſin which the grace of the goſpel cannot pardon.

All that I have to add under this head, is the caſe of thoſe who die in deſpair of God's mercy. This is commonly thought a very hopeleſs ſtate; for to deſpair of the mercy of God is a great ſin, and therefore ſuch men die in the actual commiſſion of ſin unrepented of, and byſtanders are apt to ſuſpect their deſpair to be little better than their final doom and ſentence. And yet many times we ſee men labouring under deſpair in their laſt agonies, who have, to all outward appearance, lived very innocent and virtuous lives; and it is hard to judge ſo ſeverely of them as to think they were ſecret hypocrites, and that God has

finally rejected them, becauſe they paſs ſuch a ſevere judgement upon themſelves.

Now, I confeſs, deſpair is as uncomfortable a ſtate as any man can die in; but I cannot think it ſo fatal and dangerous as ſome imagine: for let us conſider what the nature of deſpair is, and wherein the ſinfulneſs of it conſiſts.

To diſbelieve the promiſes of grace and mercy made to true penitent ſinners by Jeſus Chriſt, is infidelity, not deſpair: and this indeed is a great and unpardonable ſin; for it is to renounce the faith of Chriſt, and the grace of the goſpel. But this is not what we commonly call deſpair. Such men believe the goſpel of Chriſt, and all the promiſes of it, as firmly as others do: they do not doubt but God will forgive all true penitents through the merits and mediation of Jeſus Chriſt; and therefore are as true and ſincere believers as thoſe who do not deſpair: but their deſpair is in the application of theſe promiſes to themſelves; that is, they fear that they are not within the terms and conditions of goſpel-grace; that they are not true penitents; that their day of grace is expired, and now they ſhall not receive the bleſſing, though, as Eſau did, they ſeek it earneſtly with tears; or, it may be, that

that they are reprobates, who have no right to the promiſes of the goſpel.

Now, if theſe men may upon all other accounts be very good Chriſtians, but are either oppreſſed with melancholy, or diſturbed with falſe and miſtaken notions of religion; can we think that their melancholy, or miſtakes, which make them paſs ſo falſe a judgement upon themſelves, ſhall make God condemn them too, who knows them better than they know themſelves? Should a man who has a delirious fancy accuſe himſelf of theft, or murder, or treaſon, which he was never guilty of; would a juſt and righteous judge, who certainly knows that he is not guilty of thoſe crimes, condemn him, only becauſe he condemns himſelf? Suppoſe a man who is in the right way to heaven ſhould be perſuaded by ſome travellers he meets that he has miſtaken his way, and upon this he ſhould fall into great horrors and agonies, and give himſelf for loſt; is this man ever the farther off of heaven, becauſe he is perſuaded that he has miſtaken the way?

The falſe judgements dying men make of themſelves, either through enthuſiaſm, preſumption, or deſpair, ſhould not determine their final ſtate. Men may go to hell with all the triumphs of a deluded fancy,

which promiſes nothing leſs than eternal glories; and thoſe who go trembling out of this world, may find themſelves happily miſtaken in the next. It is a wrong notion of juſtifying faith, which makes men conclude deſpair to be ſo damning and unpardonable a ſin. If juſtifying faith were nothing elſe but a ſtrong belief and perſuaſion that we are juſtified, there were good reaſon to conclude deſpair to be a mortal ſin, becauſe it is a direct contradiction to juſtifying faith. Nay, if the juſtifying act of faith were an actual reliance and recumbency on Chriſt for ſalvation, deſpair muſt be very mortal; becauſe while men are under thoſe agonies, they do not, they cannot rely on Chriſt for ſalvation; for they believe that Chriſt has caſt them off, and will not ſave them. But to believe in Chriſt, that he is the Saviour of the world, that he has made expiation for our ſins, and intercedes for us at the right hand of God, and is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come unto God by him; that he will ſave all true penitent ſinners, and will ſave us if we be true penitents: I ſay, if ſuch a faith as this, when it brings forth the genuine fruits of repentance and a holy life, be a true juſtifying faith, this is conſiſtent with the blackeſt deſpair; and then men may

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be in a juſtified ſtate, though they are never ſo ſtrongly perſuaded that they are reprobates. A very good man may have his fancy diſturbed, and may paſs a falſe judgment upon himſelf; but this is no reaſon for God to condemn him, no more than God will juſtify a preſuming and enthuſiaſtic hypocrite, becauſe he juſtifies himſelf.

(4.) If death puts a final end to our work and labour, and ſhuts up our accounts, then it concerns us to do all the good we can while we live: "Whatever "our hand findeth to do, we ſhould do it "with all our might, ſeeing there is no "wiſdom, nor knowledge, nor working "in the grave, whither we are haſting." Not that the next world is an idle and unactive ſtate, where we ſhall know nothing, and have nothing to do; but death puts an end to our working for the other world: nothing can be brought to our account at the day of judgment, but the good we do while we live here; for this only we ſhall receive our reward proportionable to the increaſe and wiſe improvement of our talents.

And is not this a good reaſon why we ſhould begin to ſerve God betimes, and take all opportunities of doing good, ſince we have only a ſhort life to work in for

eternity? There are great and glorious rewards provided for good men; but thoſe ſhall have the brighteſt crowns who do the moſt good in the world, who "are "rich in good works, and lay up for "themſelves treaſures in heaven."

Indeed, the meaneſt place in heaven is a happineſs too great for us to conceive; I am ſure, much greater than our greateſt deſerts: but ſince our bountiful Lord will reward all the good ſervice we do, why ſhould we neglect doing any good, when ſuch neglects will leſſen our reward? why ſhould we be contented to loſe any degrees of glory? This is a holy ambition to be as good and to be as happy as God can make us.

This is never thought of by thoſe men who have no greater deſigns then to eſcape hell; but as for the glories of heaven, they can be contented with the leaſt ſhare of them. No man will ever get to heaven, who ſo deſpiſes the glories of it: and if a late repentance ſhould open your eyes not only to ſee your ſins, but to alter your opinions of this world and the next, yet we can never recal our paſt time; and that little time that remains, which is the very dregs and ſediments of our lives, the dead and unactive ſcene, will miniſter very few opportunities of doing good; and if

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it did, we are capable of doing very little; and if we get to heaven, that will be all: but the bright and triumphant crowns ſhall be beſtowed upon thoſe who have improved their time and their talents better.

It is the good we do while we live that ſhall be rewarded; and therefore we muſt take care to do good while we live. It is well when men who do no good while they live, will remember to do ſome good when they die: but if God ſhould accept ſuch preſents as theſe, yet it will make great abatements in the account, that they keep their riches themſelves as long as they could, and would part with nothing to God, till they could keep it no longer. It is not the gift, but the mind of the giver that is accepted. Under the goſpel, God is pleaſed with a living ſacrifice; but the offerings of the dead (and ſuch theſe teſtamentary charities are, which are intended to have no effect as long as we live) are no better than dead ſacrifices; and it may be queſtioned whether they will be brought into the account of our lives, if we do no good while we live. The caſe is different as to thoſe who did all the good they could while they lived, and when they ſaw they could live no longer, took care to do good after death. Such ſurviving charities as theſe prolong our lives, and add daily to

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our account: when ſuch men are removed into the other world, they are doing good in this world ſtill, they have a ſtock a-going below, the increaſe and improvements of which will follow them into the other world. Men who have been charitable all their lives, may prolong their charity after death: and this will be brought to the account of their lives: but I cannot ſee how a charity which commences after death, can be called doing good while we live; and then it cannot belong to the account of our lives. All that can be ſaid for it is this; that they make their wills, whereby they bequeath theſe charities, while they live; and therefore their bequeathing theſe charities is an act of their lives; but they never intend they ſhall take place while they live, but after their death. And when they never intended their charity to be an act of their lives, I know not why God ſhould account it ſo. Theſe death-bed charities are too like a death-bed repentance; men ſeem to give their eſtates to God and the poor, juſt as they part with their ſins, when they can keep them no longer. This is much ſuch a charity, as it is devotion to bequeath our dead bodies to the church or cancel, which we would never viſit while we lived.

But yet, as I have already intimated, this

this is the only way to prolong our lives, and to have an increaſing account after death, to lay the foundations of ſome great good to the world, which ſhall out-live us; which, like ſeed ſown in the earth, ſhall ſpring up, and yield a plentiful harveſt, while we ſleep ſweetly in the duſt: ſuch as the religious education of our children and families, which may propagate itſelf in the world, and laſt many ages after we are dead; the endowment of public ſchools and hoſpitals; in a word, whatever is for the relief of the neceſſities, or for the inſtruction and good government of mankind, when we are gone. To do good while we live, and to lay deſigns of great good to future generations, will both come into our account, and this may extend the account of our lives much beyond the ſhort period of them in this world.

(5.) If death puts an end to our account, methinks a dying-bed is a little of the lateſt to begin it; for this is to begin juſt where we muſt end. The account of our lives is the account of the good or evil we have done while we lived: and what account can a dying man give of this, who has ſpent his whole life in ſin and wickedneſs? If he muſt be judged according to what he hath done in the body, how ſad

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is his account, and how impoſſible is it for him to mend it now? for when he is juſt a-dying, it is too late for him to begin to live. If "without holineſs no man "ſhall ſee God," how hopeleſs is his condition who has lived a wicked and profligate life all his days; and is now paſt living, and therefore paſt living a holy life? A man who is confined to a ſick and dying bed is incapable of exerciſing the virtues of life; his time of work is over, almoſt as perfectly over as if he were dead; and therefore his account is finiſhed, and he muſt expect his reward according to what he has already done.

No, you will ſay, he may ſtill repent of his ſins; and a true penitent ſhall find mercy even at his laſt gaſp. Now, I readily grant, that all true penitents ſhall be ſaved, whenſoever they truly repent; but it is hard to think, that any dying ſorrows, or the dying vows and reſolutions of ſinners, ſhall be accepted by God for true repentance. The miſtakes of this matter are very fatal, and therefore I ſhall briefly explain it.

In expounding the promiſes of the goſpel, we muſt take care to reconcile the goſpel to itſelf, and not make one part of it contradict or overthrow another. Now, as the goſpel promiſes pardon of ſin to true repentance,

repentance, ſo it makes holineſs of life as neceſſary a condition of ſalvation as true repentance. "Without holineſs no man "ſhall ſee God." *Heb.* xii. 14. "God "will render to every man according to "his deeds: to them who by a patient "continuance in well doing, ſeek for glo- "ry, and honour, and immortality, eter- "nal life: but unto them that are con- "tentious, and do not only not obey the "truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs; indig- "nation and wrath, tribulation and an- "guiſh upon every ſoul of man that doth "evil; but glory, honour and peace to "every man that worketh good." *Rom.* ii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. "Be not deceived, God is "not mocked; for whatſoever a man ſow- "eth, that ſhall he alſo reap: for he that "ſoweth to the fleſh, ſhall of the fleſh reap "corruption; but he that ſoweth to the "ſpirit, ſhall of the ſpirit reap life ever- "laſting." *Gal.* vi. 7, 8. The promiſes of forgiveneſs to repentance are not more expreſs than theſe texts are, which declare that we ſhall be rewarded according to our works: and we have as much reaſon to believe the one as the other; and if we believe the goſpel, we muſt believe them both: and then repentance and a holy life are both neceſſary to ſalvation; and then the dying ſorrows of ſinners, who have lived

lived very wicked lives, and are paſt mending them now, cannot be true ſaving repentance. If ſorrow for ſin, without a holy life, can carry men to heaven, then I am ſure holineſs is not neceſſary; then men may ſee God without holineſs; and then the promiſes of pardon to repentance (if this dying ſorrow be true repentance) overthrows the neceſſity of a holy life; and the neceſſity of a holy life contradicts the promiſes of pardon to ſuch penitents; and then either one or both of them muſt be falſe.

To ſtate this matter plainly, and in a few words, we muſt diſtinguiſh between two kinds of repentance; (1.) The baptiſmal repentance: (2.) Repentance upon a relapſe, or falling into any known and wilful ſin.

(1.) By baptiſmal repentance I mean that repentance which is neceſſary in adult perſons, in order to their receiving Chriſtian baptiſm. This is the repentance which is moſt frequently mentioned in the New Teſtament, and to which the promiſe of remiſſion and forgiveneſs is annexed. This our Saviour preached, "Repent, for the "kingdom of heaven is at hand," *Mat.* iv. 17. this he gave authority to his apoſtles to preach, "That repentance and remiſſion "of ſins ſhould be preached in his name

" among all nations," *Luke* xxiv. 47. Now this repentance, both as to Jews and Heathens, who embraced the faith of Chriſt, was renouncing all their former ſins, and falſe ſuperſtitions, or idolatrous worſhip; and this qualified them for baptiſm, in which they obtained the remiſſion of all their ſins, in the name of Chriſt. And for this reaſon remiſſion of ſins is promiſed to repentance; becauſe all ſuch penitents are received to baptiſm, which is the waſhing of regeneration, which waſhes away all their ſins, and puts them into a ſtate of grace and favour with God; as St Peter tells the Jews, " Repent, and be baptized every one " of you in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for " the remiſſion of ſins," *Acts* ii. 38. And much to the ſame purpoſe Annanias told St Paul, " Ariſe, and be baptized, waſh " away thy ſins, calling on the name of " the Lord," *Acts* xxii. 17. And I know not any one text in the New Teſtament wherein the remiſſion of ſin is abſolutely promiſed to repentance, but what muſt be underſtood of this baptiſmal repentance: and then repentance and remiſſion of ſin are inſeparably annexed; becauſe ſuch penitents waſh away all their ſins in baptiſm, and come pure and undefiled out of that myſtical fountain which is ſet open for ſin

and for uncleanneſs, to waſh in and to be clean.

Now I grant, ſhould any perſon who comes to baptiſm, rightly qualified and diſpoſed, with a ſincere repentance, and ſtedfaſt faith in Chriſt, die ſoon after he is baptized, before he has time and opportunity to exerciſe any of the graces of the Chriſtian life, ſuch a man ſhall go to heaven without actual holineſs: the remiſſion of his ſins in baptiſm, upon his repentance, will ſave him, though he have not time to bring forth the fruits of repentance in a holy life. And this is the only caſe I know of, wherein a penitent can be ſaved without actual holineſs, *viz.* at baptiſm, by grace and regeneration. Only the primitive church, and I think with very good reaſon, allowed the ſame to martyrdom when it prevented the baptiſm of young converts; as we know, under the Pagan perſecutions young converts, who made bold confeſſions of their faith in Chriſt, were hurried away to martyrdom before they had opportunity of being baptized. But ſuch men were baptized in their own blood, and that ſupplied the want of water-baptiſm, which they could not have. Now, in this caſe alſo, if martyrdom be inſtead of baptiſm, as the primitive church thought it; then, had any heathen been converted from

a lewd and profligate life to the faith of Chriſt, and been immediately apprehended and hauled to martyrdom, before he could either be baptized, or give any other teſtimony of the reformation of his life and manners, but by dying a martyr; this man alſo would go to heaven, without actual holineſs of life; as a baptized penitent, who dies immediately after his baptiſm, ſhall.

And this ſeems to me to give the beſt account of the caſe of the penitent thief upon the croſs; which one example has encouraged ſo many ſinners to delay their repentance to the laſt minute, and has deſtroyed ſo many ſouls by ſuch delays. His caſe ſeems to be this: it is probable he had heard of Chriſt, and the fame of his great miracles, before; and that opinion ſome had of him, that he was that Meſſias whom God had promiſed to ſend into the world: for we can hardly think that any man who lived in thoſe days ſhould never have heard of Chriſt, whoſe fame went through the whole nation. But yet the courſe of life this thief led, gave him no great curioſity to enquire into ſuch matters, till he was apprehended for robbery, and condemned to die at the ſame time with Chriſt. This extraordinary accident made him more curiouſly enquire after him, and learn all the circumſtances of his apprehenſion and trial

and uſage, and behaviour and anſwers, eſpecially when he ſaw him, and was to die with him: and, in ſhort, he obſerved ſo much as convinced him that he was the true Meſſias, though he ſaw him nailed in ſo ſhameful a manner to the croſs.

Now, if this was his caſe, and we muſt ſuppoſe this, or ſomething like it, unleſs we will ſay that he was miraculouſly inſpired upon the croſs with the faith of Chriſt, without knowing any thing of him before, which has no foundation in the ſtory, and is without any precedent or example; I ſay, if this was his caſe, according to the principles laid down, we muſt grant, that if this thief had renounced his wicked courſe of life, and profeſſed his faith in Chriſt, and been baptized in his name, tho' he had immediately ſuffered upon the croſs, he muſt have gone directly to heaven or paradiſe, as Chriſt promiſed him he ſhould, by virtue of remiſſion of all his ſins in baptiſm. Nay, we muſt grant further, that if inſtead of baptiſm, he had at that time died a martyr for the profeſſion of his faith in Chriſt; this would have ſupplied the place of baptiſm, and have tranſlated him to paradiſe. All then that we have to enquire is, whether his confeſſion of Chriſt upon the croſs, might not as well ſupply the want of water-baptiſm, as martyrdom;

tyrdom; nay, whether it were not equivalent to martyrdom itſelf, and might not reaſonably be accepted by our Saviour as ſuch. Water-baptiſm he could not have; a martyr he could not die, for he died a melafactor; but he confeſſed his faith in Chriſt when he ſaw him hanging upon the croſs, which was a more glorious act of faith than to have died upon the croſs for him. He confeſſed Chriſt when his own diſciples fled from him, and when Peter himſelf denied him; and diſcovered his glory through the meaneſt diſguiſe that ever it was concealed under, even in this world: and why ſhould not this paſs for the faith and confeſſion of martyrdom? And then the thief upon the croſs was ſaved as by baptiſm; which is, "not the "putting away the filth of the fleſh, but "the anſwer of a good conſcience towards "God," 1 *Pet.* iii. 21. Which deſcription of baptiſm gives us a plain reaſon why martyrdom ſhould ſupply the place of baptiſm, and is as good a reaſon why the thief's confeſſion of Chriſt upon the croſs ſhould do ſo.

This example then of the thief upon the croſs, is no reaſonable encouragement to any baptiſed Chriſtian to live a wicked life, and delay his repentance till the hour of death, in hopes of being ſaved at laſt, as

he was; for he was ſaved as new repenting converts are, by baptiſm; not as baptized ſinners hope to be, by a death-bed ſorrow, and remorſe of conſcience.

And yet this is the only example which with any ſhew of reaſon is alledged to prove the ſufficiency of a death-bed repentance; for the parable of the labourers who were called to work in the vineyard at different hours, ſome early in the morning, others at the third, the ſixth, the eleventh hour of the day, is nothing at all to this purpoſe. *Matt.* xx. 1, *&c.* The ſeveral hours of the day in that parable do not ſignify the ſeveral hours of mens lives, but the different ages of the world; and therefore thoſe labourers who are called into the vineyard about the eleventh hour of the world, that is, towards the end or in the laſt age of the world, might be called at the beginning of their lives, and work on to the end of them: for the deſign of that parable is to ſhew, that the Gentiles, who were called into the vineyard, or received into the church of Chirſt toward the concluſion of the world, ſhould be admitted to equal privileges and rewards with the Jews, who were God's ancient people, and had been called into the vineyard early in the morning; which occaſioned their murmuring againſt the goodman

goodman of the houſe, as we know the Jews murmured upon this account: and nothing more prejudiſed them againſt the goſpel of our Saviour, than that the Gentiles were received into the church without circumciſion. The ſame thing our Saviour repreſents in the parable of the prodigal. The return of the prodigal to his father's houſe, in the converſion of the Gentiles, who were the younger brother, and had been a great prodigal for many ages: the elder brother, who always lived at home with his father, was the Jewiſhchurch: but when this young prodigal was receivedby his father with feaſting and muſic, and all the expreſſions of joy, his elder brother grew jealous of it, and thought himſelf much injured by his father's fondneſs of the returning prodigal, and refuſed to come in, and bear his part in the ſolemnity; as the Jews rejected the goſpel, becauſe the Gentiles were received into the church, *Luke* xv. 13. *&c.*

And that this muſt be the true meaning of the parable of the labourers, appears from this, that thoſe who were called into the vineyard at the eleventh hour received a reward equal to thoſe who had borne the heat and burden of the day; which is agreeable enough, if we expound it of different ages of the church: for there is great

great reaſon why the Gentiles, though they came later into the vineyard, ſhould be made at laſt equal with the Jews, who were God's ancient people. But if we expound this of entering upon the vineyard at different ages of our life, it ſeems very unequal, that thoſe who begin a life of virtue juſt at the concluſion of their lives, ſhould be rewarded with thoſe who have ſpent their whole lives in the ſervice of God; that is, that thoſe who do very little good ſhall receive as great a reward as thoſe who do a hundred times as much; which is a direct contradiction to the ſcope and deſign of our Saviour's parable about the pounds and talents, *Matt.* xxv. 14, &c. *Luke* xx. 12, &c. But ſuppoſe it were to be underſtood, not of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian church, but of particular Chriſtians; yet their being called to work in the vineyard, at what hour ſoever it was, though the eleventh hour, was their admiſſion into the Chriſtian church, their firſt converſion to the faith of Chriſt; and for this time they laboured in the vineyard, lived a holy and religious life. And I readily grant, ſhould a Jew, a Turk, or a Pagan be converted to Chriſtianity in the eleventh hour, in his declining age, and from that time live in obedience to the goſpel of Chriſt; there is no doubt but he

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ſhall be greatly rewarded. But what is this to any of us, who were born of Chriſtian parents, baptized in our very infancy, inſtructed in the Chriſtian religion from the very beginning, and have always profeſſed the faith of Chriſt, but lived like Pagans and infidels? We are not called into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, but early in the morning; and though men who are called at the laſt hour ſhall be rewarded for that hour's work, this does not prove that men who entering into the vineyard in the morning, play or riot away their time till the eleventh hour, ſhall receive a day's wages for an hour's work.

But ſuppoſe this too, yet it will not anſwer the caſe of a death-bed repentance: ſuch men delay not till the eleventh hour, but till night comes, when they can do no work at all; whereas thoſe who came laſt into the vineyard wrought an hour. Now that God in infinite grace and goodneſs will reward men for one hour's work, does not prove that he will reward thoſe who do no works, but ſpend their whole day idly or wickedly, and only aſk his pardon for not working at night.

(2.) But what a fatal cheat theſe men put upon themſelves will better appear if we conſider the ſecond kind of repentance, which is repentance after baptiſm, when men

men are relapſed into the commiſſion of new ſins, after they have waſhed away all their old ſins in the laver of regeneration, which is the only notion of repentance concerned in this queſtion: for ſuch ſinners, when they come to die, are to repent of a whole life ſpent in wickedneſs, after baptiſm; and this extremely alters the caſe: for though faith and repentance (as that repentance ſignifies a ſorrow for paſt ſins, and the purpoſes and reſolutions of a new life) be the only conditions of baptiſmal remiſſion and juſtification, yet when we are baptized, we then covenant with God for an actual obedience and holineſs of life, "to deny all ungodlineſs and worldly "luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly "and godly in this preſent world:" and therefore mere repentance, or a ſorrow for ſin, with the moſt ſolemn reſolutions and vows of a new life (which is all the repentance dying men can have) cannot, according to the terms of the goſpel, be accepted inſtead of the obedience and holineſs of our lives. Had the goſpel ſaid, You ſhall either abſtain from all ſin, and do good while you live, or repent of all your ſins when you die; this had been a ſufficient encouragement for a death-bed repentance: but when holineſs of life is made the neceſſary condition of ſeeing God,

God, and " the wrath of God is revealed " from heaven againſt all unrighteouſneſs " and ungodlineſs of men," *Rom.* i. 18. when we are ſo expreſly forewarned, " that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit " the kingdom of God: be not deceived, " neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor " adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abuſers " of themſelves with mankind, nor thieves, " nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor ex- " tortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom " of God," 1 *Cor.* vi. 9, 10. when our Saviour expreſly tells us, that it is only the doers of the word that are bleſſed; that " not every one that ſaith, Lord, " Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of " heaven, but he that doth the will of my " Father which is in heaven;" that as for all others, what pretences ſoever they make, " he will profeſs to them, I never " knew you; depart from me, ye that " work iniquity:" I ſay, whoever, after ſuch expreſs declarations as theſe, can perſuade himſelf, that ſorrow for ſin, and ſome good reſolutions and fair promiſes upon a death-bed, ſhall carry him to heaven, though he has done no good in his life, and has been guilty of all, or many of thoſe ſins which the goſpel has threatened with damnation, makes void the whole goſpel of our Saviour.

But

But you'll ſay, Is there no place then for repentance under the goſpel? no remiſſion of ſins committed after baptiſm? God forbid! for who then could be ſaved? Our Saviour has taught us to pray every day, "Forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we "forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us;" *Matt.* xviii. 21, 22. and has taught us to forgive our brother, though he offend againſt us ſeventy times ſeven, in imitation of God's goodneſs in forgiving us: and if we muſt forgive ſo often, ſurely God will forgive more than once.

But then repentance after baptiſm requires not only a ſorrow for ſin, and ſome good purpoſes and reſolutions of a new life for the future, but the actual forſaking of ſin, and amendment of our lives. In baptiſm "God juſtifies the ungodly," *Rom.* iv. 5. that is, how wicked ſoever men have been, whenever they repent of their ſins, renounce their former wicked practices, and believe in Chriſt, and enter into covenant with him by baptiſm, all their former ſins are immediately forgiven and waſhed away, without expecting the actual reformation of their lives. This was plainly the caſe both of Jewiſh and Heathen converts, who upon their profeſſion of faith in Chriſt, and renouncing their former wicked lives, whatever they had

been, were immediately received to baptiſm; as St Peter exhorted the Jews, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, "in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins, and ye ſhall receive the "Holy Ghoſt," *Acts* ii. 38. and the ſame day there were three thouſand baptized. This is goſpel grace, which is the purchaſe of Chriſt's blood, that the greateſt ſinners, upon their repentance and faith in Chriſt, are received to mercy, and waſh away all their ſins in baptiſm: but when they are in covenant they ſhall then be judged according to the terms and conditions of that covenant, which requires the practice of an univerſal righteouſneſs. Such perſons muſt not expect, as St Paul reaſons, that if they continue ſtill in ſin, grace will abound; the very covenant of grace, which we enter into at baptiſm, confutes all ſuch ungodly hopes; "for how ſhall we who "are dead in ſin, live any longer therein? "Know ye not, that ſo many of us as were "baptized into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptized into his death? therefore we are "buried with him by baptiſm into death, "that like as Chriſt was raiſed from the "dead by the glory of the Father, ſo we "alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life," *Rom.* vi. 1, 2, 3, 4. This is the difference St Paul makes between the grace of the

goſpel in receiving the greateſt ſinners to baptiſm, and juſtifying them by the blood of Chriſt; and what the goſpel requires of baptized Chriſtians to continue in this juſtified ſtate. In the firſt caſe nothing is required but faith and repentance; upon which account we are ſo frequently ſaid, "to be juſtified by faith, not by the deeds "of the law; to be juſtified freely by his "grace, through the redemption that is "in Chriſt Jeſus; to be ſaved by grace "through faith; not of works, leſt any "man ſhould boaſt." And I believe upon enquiry it will be found, that juſtification by faith always relates to this baptiſmal juſtification, when by baptiſm we are received into covenant with God, and into a juſtified ſtate, only for the ſake of Chriſt, and through faith in his blood: which one thing well conſidered would put an end to moſt of the diſputes about juſtification, and about faith and works; which I cannot explain now: but ſhall only obſerve, that the conſtant oppoſition between juſtification by the faith of Chriſt, and juſtification by circumciſion and the works of the law, to the obedience of which they were obliged by circumciſion, is a manifeſt proof that juſtification by faith is our juſtification by the faith of Chriſt in baptiſm, which is our admiſſion into the Chriſtian church, makes us the members of Chriſt,

Chriſt, and the children of God, which is a ſtate of grace and juſtification; as circumciſion formerly made them God's peculiar people in covenant with him, which is the juſtification of circumciſion. *Gal.* v. 2, 3. And juſtification by faith, and juſtification by circumciſion would not be duly oppoſed, if they did not relate to the ſame kind of juſtification, that is, that juſtification which is the immediate effect of our being in covenant with God.

But now, when we are juſtified by a general repentance and faith in Chriſt at baptiſm, we alſo vow a conformity to the death of Chriſt, by "dying to ſin, and walking "in newneſs of life;" that is, we vow an univerſal obedience to all the laws of righteouſneſs which the goſpel requires of us, as circumciſion made them debtors to the whole law; which is the reaſon why the works of the law, and the evangelical righteouſneſs which the faith of Chriſt requires of us, are ſo often oppoſed in this diſpute, the one the righteouſneſs of the law, or of works, the other the righteouſneſs of faith: and therefore, as circumciſion could not juſtify thoſe who tranſgreſſed the law, no more will faith juſtify thoſe who diſobey the goſpel; but "the righ-"teouſneſs of the law muſt be fulfilled in "us, who walk not after the fleſh, but af-

" ter the ſpirit." *Rom.* ii. 13, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29. *Rom.* viii. 4.

Now the neceſſary conſequence of this is, that mere ſorrow for ſin, and the mere vows and reſolutions of obedience, without actual holineſs and obedience of life according to the terms and conditions of the goſpel, will not ſave a baptized Chriſtian: for mere ſorrow for ſin, and vows of obedience, will be accepted only in baptiſm; but when we are baptized, we muſt put our vows in execution, or we fall from our baptiſmal grace and juſtification: and therefore when we relapſe into a ſin after baptiſm, no repentance will be accepted, but that which actually reforms our lives; for baptiſmal grace is not ordinarily repeated, no more than we can repeat our baptiſm.

This I take to be the true meaning of that very difficult place, *Heb.* vi. 4, 5, 6. " For it is impoſſible for thoſe who were " once enlightened, and have taſted of the " heavenly gift, and were made partakers " of the holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the " good word of God, and the powers of " the world to come, if they ſhall fall away, " to renew them again unto repentance, " ſeeing they crucify to themſelves the " Son of God afreſh, and put him to open " ſhame." This ſevere paſſage occaſioned ſome diſpute about the cannonical authority

ty of this epiſtle; for it was thought, that the apoſtle here excluded all men from the benefit of repentance who fall into ſin again after baptiſm. But it is certain this is not the apoſtle's meaning, nor do the words import any ſuch doctrine; but his meaning is, either that men who have been baptized, and thoroughly inſtructed in the Chriſtian religion, may ſin themſelves into an impoſſibility of repentance, (which is the moſt ordinary interpretation of the words, and which ſenſe I gave before of them, and is in part the true ſenſe, though, I think, not the whole) or that men after baptiſm may fall into ſuch a ſtate as nothing can deliver them out of, but baptiſmal grace and regeneration; and ſince baptiſm cannot be repeated, the ſtate of ſuch men is hopeleſs and deſperate, according to the terms of the goſpel, however God may deal with them by a ſovereign and prerogative grace: for though we can expect and rely on no other grace but what God has promiſed in his goſpel, yet God does not abſolutely confine himſelf, nor muſt we confine his grace; and this he tells in the caſe of all apoſtates from the Chriſtian faith. The underſtanding of this is neceſſary to my preſent purpoſe; and therefore I ſhall briefly explain it.

1*ſt*, That the apoſtle here ſpeaks of perſons

ſons who were baptized, is plain from the words, "thoſe who were once enlighten-"ed," the απαξ φωτισθεντας, are thoſe who have been once baptized; for ſo φωτισθην and φωτισμος in the ancient writers ſignifies baptiſm; as Juſtin Martyr himſelf tells us, in his ſecond apology, that baptiſm is called φωτισμος, or illuminations, becauſe their minds are enlightened by it, and being once enlightened, plainly refers it to baptiſm, which can be adminiſtered but once. And what follows proves this to be the meaning of it, "and have taſted of the heaven-"ly gift:" that is, ſaith St Chryſoſtom, received remiſſion of his ſins in baptiſm: "and were made partakers of the Holy "Ghoſt," the Holy Spirit being given at baptiſm; "and have taſted of the good "word of God," been inſtructed in the doctrine of the goſpel, which in the apoſtolic age immediately followed baptiſm; for men were then admitted to baptiſm immediately upon their profeſſion of repentance and faith in Chriſt, and were afterwards inſtructed in the Chriſtian religion: "and the powers of the world to "come;" that is, thoſe miraculous gifts and powers which were beſtowed on the apoſtles, for a confirmation of the faith of Chriſt, and which moſt Chriſtians did in ſome degree or other partake of in baptiſm.

This

This is a plain deſcription of baptiſm, with the effects and conſequents of it.

2*dly*, That he ſpeaks of ſuch as after baptiſm totally apoſtatize from the faith of Chriſt, is as plain; for they are παραπεσόντας, "thoſe who fall away." From what? From their Chriſtian profeſſion, which they made at their baptiſm; that is, who renounce the faith of Chriſt, and turn Jews or Heathens again; for theſe men "crucify to themſelves the Son of God "afreſh, and put him to open ſhame:" that is, they declare him to be an impoſtor, as the Jews did when they crucified him, which is as much crucifying him again, and expoſing him to public ſhame and infamy, as they can poſſibly do. But now this deſcription can relate only to total apoſtaſies; for whatever ſins profeſſed Chriſtians are guilty of, though thereby they reproach their Lord and Saviour, yet they do not declare him to be an impoſtor, who juſtly ſuffered on the croſs, and whom they would condemn to the ſame ignominious death again, if they could: nay, thoſe who are conquered by ſome powerful and ſurpriſing fears to deny Chriſt, as Peter did, or to offer ſacrifice to idols, as many Chriſtians did under the heathen perſecution, and recover themſelves again by repentance, are not included in this ſevere

ſevere ſentence; for ſuch men do really believe in Chriſt ſtill, do not heartily renounce their baptiſmal faith, and therefore do not loſe their baptiſm, though in word and deed at preſent they deny Chriſt. The caſe of ſuch men indeed is very dangerous; for our Saviour tells us, "Whoſoever ſhall deny me before men, him "will I alſo deny before my Father which "is in heaven," *Matt.* x. 33. Thoſe who through fear of men perſiſt in ſuch a denial, ſhall not be ſaved by a ſecret and diſſembled faith; for we muſt not only believe in Chriſt, but we muſt openly profeſs our faith in him: but ſuch men may be recovered by repentance, and by a bold profeſſion of Chriſt in new dangers and temptations; theſe are lapſed Chriſtians, but not apoſtates, as Julian was, who hated the name and religion of Chriſt; and therefore they were admitted to repentance in the Chriſtian church, as not having loſt their baptiſmal faith, though through fear they denied it.

Of theſe total apoſtates the apoſtle tells, that it "is impoſſible to renew them again "unto repentance," ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν, or διὰ, as St Chryſoſtom renders it, to make them new creatures again by baptiſmal repentance; for ſo he tells us, that ἀνακαινισθῆναι, καινὸν γενέσθαι, that to be renewed is to be made

made new, which can be done only by baptiſm, τὸ γαρ καινυς ποιεῖσθαι τῦ λὐτρυ μὸνον ἐστὶ, baptiſm only makes us new creatures.

The danger then of theſe mens caſe, as the apoſtle repreſents it, is this, that they having totally apoſtatized from the faith of Chriſt, together with their faith have loſt their baptiſm, and are become Jews and Pagans again: now Jews and Pagans can never be made Chriſtians without baptiſm, wherein they are regenerated and new-made: and by the ſame reaſon theſe apoſtatized Chriſtians, who are become Jews and Pagans, can never become Chriſtians again, unleſs they be re-baptiſed; and that they cannot be, becauſe there is but one baptiſm in the Chriſtian church. And therefore, tho' we could ſuppoſe that they ſhould believe again, and repent of their ſins, they could never recover a legal right and title to mercy, and the promiſes of the goſpel-covenant: faith and repentance will not juſtify a Heathen, without baptiſm; for "he that believes, and "is baptiſed, ſhall be ſaved," are the expreſs terms of the covenant; and therefore the condition of apoſtates is very hopeleſs, who are relapſed into ſuch a ſtate, that nothing but baptiſmal grace and regeneration, nothing but being new-made and new-born, can ſave them; and that they cannot

cannot have, for they muſt not be baptiſed again. A Chriſtian muſt be but once born, no more than a man is; which poſſibly is the reaſon why St Peter tells us of ſuch apoſtates, "that their latter end is worſe "with them than their beginning," 2 *Pet.* ii. 20. for Jews and Heathens, how wicked ſoever they were, might waſh away all their ſins in baptiſm; but ſuch apoſtates "are like a ſow that was waſh-"ed, and returns again to her wallowing "in the mire." When they had waſhed away their ſins and infidelity in baptiſm, they return to their forſaken Paganiſm again, and loſe the effect of their firſt waſhing; and there is no ſecond baptiſmal waſhing to be had.

The apoſtle does not ſay that it is impoſſible thoſe men ſhould be ſaved, but it is impoſſible they ſhould be regenerated again by baptiſm, which is the only goſpel-ſtate of ſalvation. If any ſuch men be ſaved, they muſt be ſaved, as I obſerved before, by uncovenanted grace and mercy: they are in the ſtate of unbaptiſed Jews and Heathens, not of Chriſtians, who have a covenant-right to God's promiſes. And I would deſire the baptiſed atheiſts and infidels of our age to conſider of this, whoſe caſe is ſo very like this, if it be not the ſame, that it ſhould make them afraid

of

of ſetting up for wits, to ſuch infinite peril of their ſouls.

To apply this then to our preſent purpoſe: What I have now diſcourſed plainly ſhews, that a baptiſed Chriſtian muſt not always expect to be ſaved by ſuch grace as ſaves and juſtifies in baptiſm: baptiſmal grace is inſeparably annexed to baptiſm, and can be no more repeated than baptiſm. This makes the caſe of apoſtates ſo deſperate, that infidelity can be waſhed away only in baptiſm; and thoſe who apoſtatiſe after baptiſm, can never be baptiſed again; and therefore can never have any covenant-title to pardon and forgiveneſs.

And this proportionably holds good in our preſent caſe: the grace of baptiſm waſhes away all the ſins of our paſt lives, how many, how great ſoever they have been, only upon our profeſſion of our faith in Chriſt, and repentance of all our ſins, and vows of obedience to the laws of Chriſt for the future: but whoever after baptiſm lives a wicked and a profligate life, and hopes to be ſaved at laſt only by faith in Chriſt, and ſorrow for his ſins, and vows of living better, when he is juſt a-dying, will be miſerably miſtaken; for this is only the grace of baptiſm which can never be repeated, not the rule and meaſure

ſure whereby God will judge baptiſed Chriſtians, who have had time and opportunity of exerciſing thoſe Chriſtian graces which they vow at their baptiſm.

A man who retains the faith of Chriſt, though he lives wickedly, does not forfeit his baptiſm, but ſhall be forgiven whenever he repents, and forſakes his ſins, and lives a holy life: but if he delays this ſo long, that he has no time to amend his life, that he can do nothing but be ſorry for his ſins, and vow a new life; I cannot promiſe him that this will be accepted at the hour of death, becauſe the goſpel requires a holy life, not merely a death-bed ſorrow and remorſe of ſin. Sorrow for ſin, and vows of a new life, will be accepted at baptiſm, as the beginnings of a new life; but that is no reaſon why they ſhould be accepted at our death, when they are only the ſorrowful concluſion of a wicked life. God will receive us to grace and mercy at baptiſm, upon our ſolemn vows of living to him; but he has no where promiſed to accept of our dying vows inſtead of holineſs and obedience, as a recompence for a whole life ſpent in wickedneſs and folly. It is very ſeldom that ſuch dying ſorrows, or dying vows, are ſincere and hearty: but were they never ſo ſincere, (as ſometimes, though very rarely, we ſee that men who

recover from a dangerous ſickneſs, keep the vows and promiſes they then made, and that is a good proof that they were very ſincere in making them) yet do I not know any one promiſe in ſcripture to a dying repentance: the goſpel requires actual holineſs of life; and when God cuts off ſuch men in their ſins, without allowing them any time to reform their lives, it is very ſuſpicious that he rejects their ſorrows and their vows; as Wiſdom threatens, *Prov.* i. 24, &c. "Becauſe I have called "and ye refuſed; I have ſtretched out my "hand, and no man regarded--I will laugh "alſo at your calamity, and mock when "your fear cometh----Then ſhall they "call upon me, but I will not anſwer; "they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall "not find me." I will not prejudge the final ſtate of theſe men; but if God accept of ſuch a death-bed repentance, which cannot produce the actual fruits of righteouſneſs, it is more than he has promiſed, and more than he has given us authority to preach: and we ſhould conſider what infinite hazard we run by ſuch delays of repentance, that we cannot be ſaved by the expreſs terms of the goſpel; but if we be ſaved, we muſt be ſaved by an unpromiſed and uncovenanted grace and mercy; which how good ſoever God may be, we have no

reaſon to rely on. This, I know, will be thought very ſevere, but I cannot help it: it may terrify dying ſinners, but there is leſs danger in that, than innurſing men up in the deluding hopes of a death-bed repentance, which renders all the arguments and motives to a holy life ineffectual, and I fear eternally deſtroys as many as truſt in it.

If you aſk why faith and repentance, without the actual obedience of our lives, ſhould not as well be accepted by God on our death-bed, as it is at our baptiſm? I ſhall aſk another very plain queſtion, why a huſbandman who hires labourers into his vineyard in the morning, receives them into his ſervice, protection and pay, only upon their promiſe to be faithful and diligent in his work, before they have done any thing; I ſay, when theſe men have loitered away the day without working, why ſhould he not reward them at night, becauſe they then alſo profeſs themſelves very ſorry that they did not work, and make a great many promiſes and vows, that if they were to begin the day again, they would? A promiſe of faithfulneſs and diligence was reaſon enough why he ſhould take them into his ſervice; but their ſorrow for not working, and their reſolutions of working, when the time of work-

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ing is paſt, is no reaſon why they ſhould be rewarded, or eſcape the puniſhment of loiterers.

This is the very caſe here: we are ſaved by the mercies of God, and the merits of Chriſt, which we partake of by our union to him: this union is made in baptiſm, which incorporates us into the body of Chriſt; and from the very firſt moment of our union, we are in a ſtate of grace and juſtification; our ſins are waſhed away in his blood, as water purges all bodily defilements, and the Spirit of Chriſt dwells in us to renew and ſanctify us. Now all that is required by God, or that ſeems in the nature of the thing neceſſary to this union, is a general repentance of all our ſins, renouncing our former wicked courſe of life, profeſſing our faith in Chriſt, as the Son of God and Saviour of the world, and vowing obedience to his laws: for this qualifies us to be his diſciples, and to be received into his ſervice, and into the communion of his body and church; and therefore this faith and repentance juſtifies in baptiſm, becauſe thoſe who thus repent of their ſins, and believe in Chriſt, are received to baptiſm, and in baptiſm have all their ſins forgiven, and are put in a ſtate of grace and favour with God. But now though faith and repentance, and the vows of obe-

dience are ſufficient to make us the diſciples of Chriſt, and to put us into a ſtate of juſtification, yet they are not ſufficient to ſave thoſe who are the diſciples of Chriſt, without actual holineſs and obedience of life: for to be a diſciple of Chriſt, does not ſignify merely to believe in him, and to vow obedience to him, but to obey him. It is reaſonable enough, that upon our vows of obedience, we ſhould be received into his ſervice; but it is not reaſonable that we ſhould be rewarded without performing our vows; for it is as ridiculous a thing to think that our repeated ſorrows for not obeying, and our repeated and fruitleſs reſolutions of obeying our Saviour, ſhould paſs for obedience, as that the ſon ſhould be thought to do his father's will, who ſaid, "I go, Sir," but went not; eſpecially when after our vows at baptiſm we live a very ungodly life, and never think it time to repent, and to renew our vows again, till we come to die. If we conſider the difference between what is neceſſary to make us the diſciples of Chriſt, and what is required of us when we are diſciples, we ſhall ſee a plain reaſon why faith and repentance, as that ſignifies ſorrow for ſin, and vows of obedience, will juſtify in baptiſm, but will not be accepted upon a death-bed, and after a life ſpent in wickedneſs: for when a baptized Chriſtian comes to die, he is not then to be made

made a diſciple of Chriſt, and to be baptized again, but to give an account of his life ſince he has been Chriſt's diſciple; and mere faith in Chriſt, ſorrow for ſin, and vows of obedience, without actual holineſs of life, tho' with the ſacrament of baptiſm it will make a diſciple's account, eſpecially when the ſum-total of his life is nothing but ſin and ſorrow, and fruitleſs vows; for this is not that holineſs of life which Chriſt requires of his diſciples.

The ancient diſcipline of the church was a plain proof of this, that they thought a great deal more neceſſary for baptized Chriſtians than was required to qualify men for baptiſm. In the apoſtles days they baptized both Jews and Heathens immediately upon their profeſſion of faith in Chriſt, and renouncing their former wicked lives: but in caſe they fell into any groſs and ſcandalous ſins after baptiſm, they were caſt out of the communion of the church; and the profeſſion of ſorrow, and repentance for their ſins, and the moſt ſolemn vows of a new life, was not thought ſufficient to reſtore them to the peace of the church; but they were kept under the ſeverities of repentance, till they had made ſatisfaction for the ſcandal they had given to the church, and given ſufficient teſtimonies of the actual reformation of their lives.

And in the ages ſucceeding the apoſtles, this ſtate of penitents in ſome caſes was continued many years; in other caſes ſuch ſinners were never reconciled till the hour of death. Now if they had thought, as many among us now do, that ſorrow for ſin, and the vows of obedience, do immediately obtain our pardon from God for ſins committed after baptiſm, it is not imaginable why they ſhould have impoſed ſuch a long and ſevere diſcipline on penitents. If they believed God had forgiven them, why ſhould not the church forgive them, and receive them to her communion again, upon their promiſes of amendment, without ſuch a long trial of their reformation? But it is evident, they thought ſins after baptiſm not forgiven without actual reformation, and therefore would not receive them to communion again without a tried and viſible reformation of their lives. We know what diſputes there were about this matter in the primitive church: the ancient diſcipline allowed but of one repentance after baptiſm; and ſome would not allow of that in the caſe of adultery, murder and idolatry, but denied the authority of the church to receive ſuch ſinners to communion again. This was the pretence of Novatus's ſchiſm; and Tertullian, after he turned Montaniſt, ſaid many bitter

bitter things againſt the Catholics upon this arguument, which ſeemeth to queſtion the validity of repentance itſelf after baptiſm, though it did reform mens lives. But though this was a great deal too much, and did both leſſen the grace of the goſpel, and the authority which Chriſt hath given to his church; yet it is evident that all this time they were very far from thinking that ſome dying ſorrows, or dying vows, after a wicked life, would carry men to heaven: and the judgment of thoſe firſt and pureſt ages of the church ought at leaſt to make men afraid of relying on ſuch a death-bed repentance as they thought very ineffectual to ſave ſinners.

CHAP. IV.

Concerning the fear of death, and the remedies againſt it.

DEATH is commonly and very truly called the king of terrors, as being the moſt formidable thing to human nature. The love of life, and the natural principle of ſelf-preſervation, begets in all men a natural fear of dying. This is very much increaſed by a great fondneſs and paſſion for this world, which makes ſuch men, eſpecially when they are happy and proſperous,

proſperous, very unwilling to leave it; and this is ſtill increaſed by a ſenſe of guilt, and fear of puniſhment in the next world. All theſe are of a diſtinct nature, and require ſuitable remedies; and therefore I ſhall diſtinctly conſider them.

1. The natural fear of death reſults from ſelf-preſervation, and the love of our own being: for "light is ſweet, and a pleaſant "thing it is for the eyes to behold the "ſun," *Eccleſ.* xi. 7. All men love life, and the neceſſary conſequence of that is, to fear death; though this is rather a natural inſtinct, than the effect of reaſon and diſcourſe.

There are great and wiſe reaſons why God ſhould imprint this averſion to death on human nature, becauſe it obliges us to take care of ourſelves, and to avoid every thing that will deſtroy or ſhorten our lives. This, in many caſes, is a great principle of virtue, as it preſerves us from all fatal and deſtructive vices; it is a great inſtrument of government, and makes men afraid of committing ſuch villainies as the laws of their country have made capital. And therefore ſince the natural fear of death is of ſuch great advantage to us, we muſt be contented with it, though it makes the thoughts of dying a little more uneaſy: eſpecially if we conſider, that when this

this natural fear of death is not increaſed by other cauſes, (of which more preſently) it may be conquered. The miſeries and calamities of this life very often reconcile men to death, and make them paſſionately deſire it; "Wherefore is light given to "him that is in miſery, and life to the "bitter in ſoul? which long for death, "but it cometh not, and dig for it more "than for hidden treaſures; which re-"joice exceedingly and are glad when "they can find the grave," *Job* iii. 20, 21, 22. "My ſoul chuſeth ſtrangling and "death rather than life: I loathe it, I "would not live alway; let me alone, "for my days are vanity," *Job* vii. 15, 16. And if the ſenſe of preſent ſufferings can conquer the fears of death, there is no doubt but the hope of immortal life may do it alſo. For the fear of death is not an original and primitive paſſion, but reſults from the love of ourſelves, from the love of our lives and of our own being; and therefore when we can ſeparate the fear of death from ſelf-love, it is eaſily conquered. When men are ſenſible that life is no kindneſs to them, but only ſerves to prolong their miſery, they are ſo far from being afraid of death, that they court it; and were they as thoroughly convinced, that when they die, death will tranſlate

them

them to a more happy life, it would be as eaſy a thing to put off theſe bodies, as to change their clothes, or to leave an old and ruinous houſe for a more beautiful and convenient habitation.

If we ſet aſide the natural averſion, and enquire into the reaſons of this natural fear of death, we can think but of theſe two; either men are afraid that when they die they ſhall ceaſe to be, or at leaſt they know not what they ſhall be, and are unwilling to change this preſent life, which they like very well, for they know not what. But now both theſe reaſons of fear are taken away by the revelation of the goſpel, which has brought life and immortality to light; and when the reaſons of our fears are gone, ſuch an unaccountable averſion and reluctancy to death ſignifies little more than to make us patient of living, rather than unwilling to die; for a man who has ſuch a new glorious world, ſuch a happy immortal life in his view, could not very contentedly delay his removal thither, were not death in the way, which he naturally ſtartles at, and draws back from, though his reaſon ſees nothing frightful or terrible in it.

The plain and ſhort account of this matter is this: we muſt not expect wholly to conquer our natural averſion to death; St Paul

Paul himſelf did not deſire "to be un-"clothed, but clothed upon, that morta-"lity might be ſwallowed up of life," 2 *Cor.* iii. 4. Were there not ſome remaining averſions to death mixed with our hopes and deſires of immortality, martyrdom itſelf, except the patient enduring the ſhame and tortures of it, would be no virtue. But though this natural averſion to death cannot be wholly conquered, it may be extremely leſſened, and brought next to nothing, by the certain belief and expectation of a glorious immortality; and the only way to arm ourſelves againſt theſe natural fears of dying is to confirm ourſelves in this belief, that death does not put an end to us; that our ſouls ſhall ſurvive in a ſtate of bliſs and happineſs, when our bodies ſhall rot in their graves; and that theſe mortal bodies themſelves ſhall at the ſound of the laſt trumpet ariſe again out of the duſt immortal and glorious. A man who believes and expects this, can have no reaſon to be afraid of death; nay, he has great reaſon not to fear death: and that will reconcile him to the thoughts of it, though he tremble a little under the weakneſs and averſions of nature.

2. Beſides the natural averſions to death, moſt men have contracted a great fondneſs and paſſion for this world, and that makes them

them ſo unwilling to leave it: whatever glorious things they hear of another world, they ſee what is to be had in this, and they like it ſo well, that they do not expect to mend themſelves, but, if they were at their choice, would ſtay where they are: and this is a double death to them, to be ſnatched away from their admired enjoyments, and to leave whatever they love and delight in behind them. And there is no remedy that I know of for theſe men to cure their fears of death, but only to rectify their miſtaken opinion of things, to open their eyes to ſee the vanity of this world, and the brighter and more dazzling glories of the next.

There are different degrees of this, and therefore this remedy muſt be differently applied. Some men are wholly ſunk in fleſh and ſenſe, and have no taſte at all of rational and manly pleaſures, much leſs of thoſe which are purely intellectual and divine; they are ſlaves to their luſts, lay no reſtraint on their brutiſh appetites; the world is their God, and they doat on the riches, and pleaſures, and honours of it as the only real and ſubſtantial goods. Now theſe men have great reaſon to be afraid of death; for when they go out of this world, they will find nothing that belongs to this world in the next; and thus

their happineſs and their lives muſt end together. It is fitting they ſhould fear death; for if the fear of death will not cure their fondneſs for this world, nothing elſe can: you muſt not expect to perſuade them that the next world is a happier place than this; but the beſt way is to ſet before them the terrors of the next world, thoſe lakes of fire and brimſtone prepared for the devil and his angels; to aſk them our Saviour's queſtion, "What ſhall it profit a "man to gain the whole world, and to loſe "his own ſoul? or what ſhall a man give "in exchange for his ſoul?" Theſe men ought to fear on, till the fear of death cures their vicious paſſion and fondneſs for this world; and then the fear of death will by degrees cure itſelf.

Others there are who have a true reverence for God, and govern their inclinations and paſſions to the things of this world with regard to his laws; they will not raiſe an eſtate by injuſtice, oppreſſion, or perjury; they will not tranſgreſs the rules of ſobriety and modeſty in the uſe of ſenſual pleaſures; they will not purchaſe the honours and preferments of this world at the price of their ſouls: but yet they love this world very well, and are extremely delighted in the enjoyments of it; and have a plentiful fortune, or a thriving

trade, or the favour of their prince; they live at eaſe, and think this world a very pleaſant place, and are ready to cry, "It "is good for us to be here." Now it cannot be avoided, but that in proportion to men's love of this world, though it be not an immoral and irregular paſſion, they will be more afraid, and more unwilling to leave it. When we are in the full enjoyment of an earthly felicity, it is difficult for very good men to have ſuch a ſtrong and vigorous ſenſe of the next world, as to make them willing and contented to leave this; they deſire to go to heaven, but they are not over-haſty in their deſires; they can be better pleaſed, if God ſees fit, to ſtay here a little longer; and when they find themſelves a-going, are apt to caſt back their eyes upon this world, as thoſe who are loth to part. This makes it ſo neceſſary for God to exerciſe even good men with afflictions and ſufferings, to wean them from this world, which is a ſcene of miſery, and to raiſe their hearts to heaven, where true and unmixed happineſs dwells.

The only way then to cure this fear of death, is to mortify all remains of love and affection for this world; to withdraw ourſelves as much as may be from the converſation of it; to uſe it very ſparingly,

and

and with great indifference; to ſupply the wants of nature, rather than to enjoy the pleaſures of it; to have our converſation in heaven, to meditate on the glories of that bleſſed place; to live in this world upon the hopes of unſeen things; to accuſtom ourſelves to the work and to the pleaſures of heaven; to praiſe and adore the great Maker and Redeemer of the world; to mingle ourſelves with the heavenly choir, and poſſeſs our very fancies and imaginations with the glory and happineſs of ſeeing God and the bleſſed Jeſus, of dwelling in his immediate preſence, of converſing with ſaints and angels. This is to live like ſtrangers in this world, and like citizens of heaven; and then it will be as eaſy to us to leave this world for heaven, as it is for a traveller to leave a foreign country to return home. This is the height and perfection of Chriſtian virtue; it is our mortifying the fleſh, with its affections and luſts; it is our dying to this world, and living to God; and when we are dead to this world, the fear of dying and leaving this world is over: for what ſhould a man do in this world who is dead to it? When we are alive to God, nothing can be ſo deſireable as to go to him; for here we live to God only by faith and hope, but that is the proper place

for this divine life, where God dwells: ſo that, in ſhort, a life of faith, as it is our victory over the world, ſo it is our victory over death too; it diſarms it of all its fears and terrors, it raiſes our hearts ſo much above this world, that we are very well pleaſed to get rid of theſe bodies which keep us here, and to leave them in the grave, in hopes of a bleſſed reſurrection.

3. The moſt tormenting fears of death are owing to a ſenſe of guilt, which indeed are rather a fear of judgment than of death, or a fear of death as it ſends us to judgement. And here we muſt diſtinguiſh between three ſorts of men, whoſe caſe is very different; *1ſt*, Thoſe who are very good men, who have made it the care of their lives to pleaſe God, and to ſave their ſouls. *2dly*, Thoſe who have lived very ungodly lives, and are now awakened by the approaches of death, to ſee an angry and provoked judge, an injured Saviour, and a righteous tribunal; and think they hear that fatal doom and ſentence pronounced on them by their own conſciences, "Go "ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared "for the devil and his angels." *3dly*, Thoſe who are doubtful of their own condition, and are apt to fear the worſt.

1ſt, As for the firſt ſort of theſe men, who

who have ſincerely endeavoured to pleaſe God, and have the teſtimony of their conſciences, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity they have had their converſation in this world; Chriſt has delivered them from all their fears by his death upon the croſs, and his interceſſion for them at the right-hand of God. The beſt men dare not ſtand the trial of ſtrict and impartial juſtice; they are conſcious to themſelves of ſo many ſins, of ſuch great imperfections and defects, that their only hope is in the mercy of God, through the merits and mediation of Chriſt; and in this hope they can triumph over death, as St Paul does; "O death, where is thy ſting? O grave, "where is thy victory? The ſting of death "is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law: "but thanks be to God, who hath given "us the victory, through our Lord Jeſus "Chriſt;" *Cor.* xv. 55, 56, 57. who deſtroyed ſin, and plucked out the ſting of death, by his death upon the croſs; who triumphed over death by his reſurrection from the dead, and is inveſted with power to raiſe all his true diſciples from the dead; "is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all thoſe "that come unto God by him, ſeeing he "ever liveth to make interceſſion for "them," *Heb.* vii. 25.

This is the happy ſtate of good men

when they come to die: they can look into the other world without terror; where they ſee, not a court of juſtice, but a throne of grace; where they ſee a father, not a judge, a Saviour who died for them, and has redeemed them with his own blood: what a bleſſed calm and ſerenity poſſeſſes their ſouls! nay, what joy and triumph tranſports them! "how do their ſouls mag-"nify the Lord, and their ſpirits rejoice "in God their Saviour!" when they ſee him ready to pronounce them bleſſed, and to ſet the crown upon their heads? "Who "would not die the death of the righ-"teous, and deſire that his latter-end may "be like his?" what wiſe man would not live the life of the righteous, "that his lat-"ter-end may be like his;" that in the agonies of death, and in the very jaws of the grave, no diſturbed thoughts may diſcompoſe him, no guilty fears diſtract him; but he may go out of the world with all the joyful preſages of eternal reſt and peace?

2*dly*, As for wicked men, who never concerned themſelves with the thoughts of God, and another world, while they were in health; many times a dangerous ſickneſs, which gives them a nearer view of death and judgment awakens their conſciences, and overwhelms them with the unſupportable terrors of future vengeance; when they begin to lament their ill-ſpent lives,

lives, to tremble before the juſt and righteous judge, whom they have provoked by repeated villainies, whoſe being they formerly denied, or whoſe power and juſtice they defied: now they cry paſſionately to Chriſt for mercy, and will needs have him to be their Saviour, though they would not own him for their Lord, nor ſubmit to his laws and government: now theſe men are mighty earneſt for comfort; the miniſter, who was the ſubject of their drollery before, is ſent for in great haſte, and it is expected from him that he ſhould lull their conſciences aſleep, and ſend them quietly into another world to receive their doom there.

Now it is very fitting to let theſe men know, while they are well, that there is no comfort to be had when they come to die; "for there is no peace, ſaith my God, to "the wicked:" and no man who knows them can ſpeak peace to them, without making a new goſpel, or corrupting the old one.

What I have already diſcourſed concerning a death-bed repentance, is a plain proof of this: But though we ſet aſide all that, and proceed upon the common principle, that a true penitent, whenever he ſincerely repents, though it be upon his death-bed, after a long life of wickedneſs, ſhall be pardoned

doned and rewarded by God; yet upon theſe principles it is impoſſible that a wicked man, when he comes to die, ſhould have any comfort, without a vain and enthuſiaſtic preſumption; and the reaſon is very plain, becauſe it is impoſſible either for himſelf or others to judge whether his repentance be true and ſincere; ſuch a repentance as, if he was to live longer, would reform his life, and bring forth the fruits of an univerſal righteouſneſs: and it is agreed on all hands that no other repentance but this can be accepted by God. Now it is abſolutely impoſſible, without a revelation, for any man to know this, who begins his repentance upon a death-bed: he may feel indeed the bitter pangs and agonies of ſorrow, and may be ſincerely and heartily ſorry that he has ſinned: and this every dying ſinner is who is ſorrowful; he is ſincerely ſorrowful; that is, he does not counterfeit a ſorrow, but really feels it: and I know nothing elſe to make ſorrow ſincere, but that it is real and not counterfeited; and therefore to be ſorrowful, and to be ſincerely ſorrowful, is the ſame thing. And will any man ſay, that whoever is ſorry for his ſins when he comes to die, ſhall be ſaved? Then no ſinner can be damned, who does not die an atheiſt, or ſtupid and diſtracted, or ſuddenly without

out any warning: for it is impoſſible for a ſinner, who is in his wits, and believes that wicked men ſhall be eternally puniſhed in the next world, not to feel an amazing remorſe and ſorrow of mind, when he ſees himſelf juſt a falling into hell.

A dying ſorrow then, though it may be ſharp and ſevere, almoſt to the degree of amazement and diſtraction, (and it is hard if ſuch a ſorrow be not real and ſincere) is not ſaving repentance; and therefore tho' ſinners may feel themſelves very heartily ſorrowful, this does not prove them to be true penitents: and yet this is the only evidence they can have of their repentance, and the only thing they can rely on, that they are ſure their ſorrow is very ſincere; and I doubt not but it is, for all true ſorrow is ſincere: but ſinners who are very ſorry for their ſins, may be damned.

Since then ſorrow for ſin is the only evidence ſuch men can have of the ſincerity of their repentance, let us conſider whether the mere dying ſorrows of ſinners be any evidence at all of this, or what kind of evidence it is.

True repentance does at leaſt include a change of mind, a turning from our ſins to God, a deep ſenſe of the evil of ſin, and an abhorrence of ourſelves for it; a great reverence for God, and for his laws, as well

well as a dread of his judgments, and a deliberate and ſerious reſolution of changing our courſe of life, and, for the time to come, of living to God, and to the purpoſes of his glory; never to return to our old ſins again, but diligently to exerciſe ourſelves in all the duties and offices of a Chriſtian life.

Now ſuppoſe a man who has lived wickedly all his life, ſhould be thus changed in a moment, and prove ſuch a true penitent as I have now deſcribed; and that God, who knows the hearts of men, ſees that his promiſes and vows are ſincere, and that if he were to live any longer he would be a good man, and therefore will pardon and reward him, not according to what he has done, but according to what he foreſees he would have done, had he lived any longer (which is to judge men, not according to their works, but according to his own foreknowledge, which the ſcripture never makes the rule of future judgement): I ſay, ſuppoſe ſuch men may be true penitents, and pardoned by God, who knows that they are ſo; yet they can never have the comfort of it before they die, becauſe it is impoſſible for them to know it.

When men ſee themſelves a-dying, they are very ſorrowful for their ſins; ſo they ſay: but the moſt likely account of it is, that

that they are very ſorry that they are a-going to hell, as a malefactor is very ſorrowful when he is going to the gibbet. This may be the whole of their ſorrow, and it is impoſſible to prove that there ſhould be any thing more in it, and extremely improbable that there is: for what likelihood is there that men who yeſterday were very much in love with their ſins, and as little thought of falling out with them, as they did of their dying day; ſhould to-day, as ſoon as ever they were arreſted with a threatening ſickneſs, be penitents in good earneſt, and abhor their ſins in a minute, and be quite other men, upon the view of the other world? This is the caſe of all ſinners when they come to die; which makes it very ſuſpicious that there is nothing extraordinary in it, no miraculous power of the divine Spirit, to change their hearts in a moment, and make them new men; but only the common effect of a great fear, which makes men ſorry for their ſins when they come to ſuffer for them.

Now if ſuch dying ſinners can never be ſure that their ſorrow for ſin is any thing more than a great fright, they can be ſure of nothing elſe; for ſuch a ſorrow as this will counterfeit all the other acts of repentance. Men who are terribly afraid of puniſhment,

niſhment, are not only ſorry for their ſins, but this very ſorrow makes them aſhamed of them, gives them a great indignation againſt themſelves for them, makes them flatter their judge, and vow and promiſe reformation, if they could eſcape this one time. And this is ſo very common and familiar, that in all other caſes no man regards it. A judge, a father, or a maſter will not ſpare upon ſuch promiſes as theſe; and why ſhould this be thought any thing more in a dying ſinner, than in other malefactors? why ſhould that be thought a ſufficient reaſon for God to pardon, which we ourſelves think no reaſon in all other caſes? All this may be no more than the fear of hell; and I doubt the mere fear of hell, when men are dying, though it may imitate all the ſcenes of repentance, will not keep them out of hell. It is ſo very probable that this is the whole of a death-bed repentance, that no ſuch dying ſinner can have any reaſonable hope that he does truely repent; and therefore, unleſs he flatters himſelf when he dies, with a falſe and counterfeit repentance, as he did, while he lived, with the hopes of repenting before he died, he muſt expire in all the terrors and agonies of guilty fears. This is ſo miſerable a condition, that tho' we ſhould ſuppoſe ſuch a ſinner may be a

true penitent, and go to heaven at laſt, yet no wiſe man would endure thoſe dying agonies for all the falſe aud deceitful pleaſures of ſin; and yet there is no poſſible way of avoiding this, but by ſuch a timely repentance while we are well, and death at a diſtance, as may bring forth the actual fruits of holineſs, that when we come to die, we may have ſome better evidence of the ſincerity of our repentance, than mere dying ſorrow.

3. Let us now conſider the caſe of thoſe who are doubtful what their condition is; who are neither ſo good as to be out of all danger and fear, nor ſo bad as to be out of hope: and I need not tell any man that this is a ſtate between hope and fear, which is a very uneaſy ſtate when eternal happineſs or miſery is the matter of the doubt. This is the caſe of thoſe men who, after all their good reſolutions, are ever and anon conquered by temptations; who, as ſoon as their tears are dried up for their laſt fall, fall again, and then lament their ſins, and reſolve again; and while they are thus interchangeably ſinning, repenting and reſolving, before they have got a laſting victory, or are arrived to a ſteady virtue, are ſummoned by death to judgement; or thoſe who have a reverence for God, but are not ſo conſtant and frequent

in their devotions; or if they abſtain from groſs and ſcandalous vices, yet they have not a due government of their paſſions, or do very little good in the world, *&c.* Here is ſuch a mixture of good and evil, that it is hard to know which is predominant: while ſuch men are in health, they are very uneaſy, and know not what to judge of themſelves: but they fall into much greater perplexities when they are alarmed with the near approaches of death and judgment. And what a deplorable ſtate is this, when we are dying, to be uncertain and anxious what will become of us to eternity?

Now there is no poſſible way to prevent theſe fears when we come to die, but by giving all diligence to make our calling and election ſure, by living ſuch holy and innocent lives, that our conſciences may not condemn us, and then we ſhall have confidence towards God, 1 *John* iii. 20, 21.

But this is ſuch a remedy as few of theſe men like: they would be glad to be ſure of heaven, but yet would go as near hell as they can, without danger of falling into it; they will ſerve God, but muſt reſerve a little favour and indulgence to their luſts; though they dare not take full draughts of ſenſual pleaſures, yet they muſt be ſipping now and then, as often as they

they can pacify their conſciences, and get rid of the fear of God, and of another world: and therefore they are very inquiſitive after other cures for an accuſing and condemning conſcience; are mighty fond of ſuch marks and ſigns of grace as will ſecure them of heaven, without the ſeverities of mortification, or the conſtant and uniform practice of an univerſal righteouſneſs. And a great many ſuch ſigns have been invented, which like ſtrong opiates aſſuage their pain and ſmart, till their conſciences awake when it is too late in the next world.

For all this is cheat and deluſion, as St John aſſures us: "Little children, let no "man deceive you; he that doth righ- "teouſneſs is righteous, even as he is righ- "teous. He that committeth ſin is of the "devil; for the devil ſinneth from the "beginning. For this purpoſe the Son "of God was manifeſted, that he might "deſtroy the works of the devil. Who- "ſoever is born of God, doth not com- "mit ſin; for his ſeed remaineth in him, "and he cannot ſin, becauſe he is born of "God. In this the children of God are "manifeſt, and the children of the devil; "whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs, is "not of God, neither he that loveth not "his brother." 1 *John* iii. 7, 8, 9, 10.

This is the only ſure evidence for heaven; and therefore every ſin men commit makes their ſtate doubtful, and this muſt fill them with perplexities and fears. Men may cheat themſelves with vain hopes and imaginations when they come to die; but nothing can be a ſolid foundation for peace and ſecurity, but an univerſal righteouſneſs.

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CONCLUSION.

FOR the concluſion of this diſcourſe, I ſhall only obſerve in a few words, that it muſt be the buſineſs of our whole lives to prepare for death; our accounts muſt be always ready, becauſe we know not how ſoon we may be called to give an account of our ſtewardſhip: we muſt be always upon our watch, as not knowing what hour our Lord will come. A good man, who has taken all his life to pleaſe God, has little more to do, when he ſees death approaching, than to take leave of his friends, to bleſs his children, to ſupport and comfort himſelf with the hopes of immortal life, and a glorious reſurrection, and to reſign up his ſpirit into the hands of God and his Saviour: his lamp is full of oil, and always burning, though it may need a little trimming when the bridegroom comes; ſome few acts of faith and hope, and ſuch devout paſſions as are proper to be exerciſed at our leavingthe world and going to God. But when the bridegroom

groom is at the door, it is too late, with the fooliſh virgins, to buy oil for our lamps: unleſs we be ready, when the bridegroom comes, to enter in with him to the marriage, the door will be ſhut againſt us: "watch therefore, for ye know neither "the day nor the hour wherein the Son "of man cometh." *Matt.* xxv. 1, &c.

Some men talk of preparing for death, as if it were a thing that could be done in two or three days, and that the proper time of doing it were a little before they die; but I know no other preparation for death but living well: and thus we muſt every day prepare for death, and then we ſhall be well prepared when death comes; that is, we ſhall be able to give a good account of our lives, and of the improvement of our talents: and he who can do this, is well prepared to die, and to go to judgement; but he who has ſpent all his days wickedly, whatever care he may take when he comes to die to prepare himſelf for it, it is certain he can never prepare a good account of his paſt life, and all his other preparations are little worth.

THE END.